Al-FAROOQ

The Life of Omar The Great

(The Second Caliph of Islam)

Prof. Shibli Numani

AL-FAROOQ

LIFE OF

OMAR THE GREAT

THE SECOND CALIPH OF ISLAM

Vol. I

by

SHAMSUL ULEMA MAULANA SHIBLI NUMANI

TRANSLATED BY

MAULANA ZAFAR ALI KHAN

1939

LAHORE

Sh. MUHAMMAD ASHRAF

KASHMIRI BAZAR

Published by
SH MUHAMMAD ASHRAF
Kashmiri Bazar - Lahore

Printed at the Ripon Printing Press, Bull Road, Lahore,
by Mirza Muhammad Sadiq

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THIS book is the result of the lifelong study of Maulana Shibli, the great Indian scholar and Orientalist of modern times. It is a well-known fact that the Maulana had to do an intensive research work which led him to ransack the libraries of Constantinople, Beirut, Alexandria, Paris, Berlin and London.

Its publication took the Muslim world by storm and was considered as a great literary event in the history of Islamic literature. By extensive study of the subject Allama Shibli collected and collated facts which were lying buried in unpublished manuscripts in the great libraries of the East and West. The book created an unparalleled enthusiasm and ran into several editions in a very short period.

The merits of the book elicited applause even from countries other than India. It was translated into Turkish by Omar Raza and was published by him from Istanbul in 1928. Another translation was made by the sister of the late King Nadir Shah into Persian and was published at Kabul.

After the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) Omar is universally acknowledged as the first great Conqueror, Founder and Administrator of the Mus-

lim Empire. It was during his Caliphate that Islam planted its banners far beyond the confines of the Arabian peninsula. This great military and administrative genius is up till now believed to be a miracle in himself, for he not only founded an Empire but gave solidarity to it which remained unshaken for centuries.

It was most regrettable, however, that the English-knowing Muslims should remain unacquainted with the 'life' of a great man like Omar written by such a great Orientalist as Shibli.

This monumental work was translated by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan as long ago as 1900 A.D. but since the privilege of publishing it was destined for us, it did not see the light of the day earlier. We have now secured its copyright and take pride in supplying the long-felt need of an authoritative work on the life of Omar.

Maulana Zafar Ali Khan's fame as a scholar in Oriental studies and, in particular, as a translator is too well-established to need introduction.

THE LIFE OF OMAR

Written by SHIBLI
Translated by ZAFAR ALI KHAN

IS PERFECTION ITSELF!

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THERE have been periods in the history of the world when the genius of a single individual has contributed more towards the formation and centralization of a nation than the combined efforts of a million not so endowed; and when a decade has showered more glory upon a country than the uneventful rôle of many a century. This was particularly the case in the annals of early Islam. The advent of Muhammad (Peace be on him) literally changed the course of events and wrought a metamorphosis which can scarcely be explained by anything short of a miracle. Born in a country which presented the cheerless spectacle of one vast trackless and arid stretch of burning sand, with uninterrupted uniformity as the only notable element in its physical condition, and brought up among a people who were proverbial for their barbarism and ignorance, Muhammad dazzled the whole world with the sublimity of his Mission and the grandeur of his Scheme which was to inculcate the Unity of God and to unite humanity in a universal Brotherhood. Almost all the great religious teachers who preceded him claimed an invidious distinction for

the votaries of their respective faiths in some form or other. The creed of Muhammad, however, introduced a new era in the annals of theistic belief, and was marked by a healthy departure from those parsimonious notions of religion which monopolized, as it were, the divine grace for a limited section of mankind. He advocated perfect equality for all those who came within the pale of Islam; and the new faith infused a spirit of liberty into the minds of its adherents which outshone the freedom of the Greek and Roman republics of yore. A king and a slave had the same weight in the scales of Islam. During the Caliphate of Omar, a Syrian prince, who was a new convert to the Islamic faith, maltreated a humble Musalman citizen, simply beçause the latter had accidentally trampled upon the magnificent toga of the great man. Complaint was made by the poor man against his wealthy tormentor to the Caliph who adjudged the aggressor guilty and sternly commanded that the prince should be publicly flogged. "Is a plebian the equal of an aristocrat?" asked the astounded prince whose perverted conceptions of equity could not see justice when it was meted out to the lowly to the detriment of the great man. "In the eyes of Islam he is," rejoind the Caliph. That same night the prince renounced the new religion and fled back to his people and to his old faith.

Muhammad was forty years of age when he

received the first revelation as a Messenger of Allah, and he had not a single friend to help him in the stupendous task of proselytizing the myriads of Arab idolaters and offering the Divine Faith to the world in the face of stubborn resistance and inveterate fanaticism. He was subjected, by turns, to the bitterest persecutions and allured by the most charming promises to refrain from preaching the new faith; but neither fear nor ambition kept him back from his set purpose. They offered him the crown of Arabia if he would only adore their deities but he wavered not from his path; they theatened to stone him to death if he did not put a stop to the dissemination of his revolutionary teachings, but he flinched not. He had an indomitable will, an unconquerable purpose. He was 63 when he died and the whole of Arabia lay at his feet; while the influence of young Islam began to make itself felt in the neighbouring Empires of Asia Minor and Persia. Twenty-three short stormy years had brought about a revolution which has been unparalleled in the annals of mankind; and the Founder of Islam left for his successors a legacy which was destined to prove, for many centuries to come, the guiding star of the civilization of the world and the arbitrator of the destinies of humanity. It was to be the fountain-head from which a Cordova, a Cairo, a Baghdad, or a Delhi was to replenish its pellucid reservoirs years afterwards; it was to be the enchan-

ter's wand the slightest touch of which was to keep Europe and Asia spell-bound for generations.

The successors of the Prophet inherited the earnestness and enthusiasm of their Great Master. Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, reigned for nearly two years and a half, but he was able, by the soundness of his judgment, the depth of his political foresight and tactfulness, to consolidate Arabia into one single whole, even in that comparatively short period of his reign, while he sent out many expeditions to Iraq and Syria, gaining several brilliant successes.

Then came Omar the Great, whose life forms the subject-matter of this work. To no person, ever since the Dawn of History, has the appellation 'great' been more deservedly conceded by posterity than to this Second Caliph of Islam. He was great in the true and exhaustive sense of the word. Alexander, Julius Cæsar and Napoleon are called great, because they were mighty governors and administrators; Peter and Fredrick are called great because they evolved order out of chaos and made their respective nations great; Solomon and Justinian may be called great because one of them was the wisest and the most magnificent potentate that ever lived and the other a great law-giver, but Omar was great because he was all that Alexander, Julius Cæsar, Napoleon, Peter, Fredrick, Justinian and Solomon together exemplified. He was a conqueror, a states-

man, a reformer, a law-giver and a spiritual leader all at once.

This may seem an extravagant statement to some, but with the fair-minded and with the student of History it can stand the minutest analysis. You may pick holes in the social and political mantle of all the great men whom I have named, and ever and anon a dark spot can be descried in the glory that covers them. The Utilitarian will at least bear me out when I say that the political achievements of some of these great men were often marked by blunders which engulfed humanity in woe and misery, while the private character of others would not bear examination. But with Omar no such fault can be found.

In his Persian campaign. Alexander ordered an indiscriminate slaughter of the entire male population of Istakhar (Persepolis) when he captured that town, which is only one of the many acts of barbarity which stain his reputation.

The character of Julius Cæsar, who was admittedly the greatest man that the ancient world produced, and "the very completeness of whose character," in the words of an eminent writer, "makes it difficult to obtain a clear grasp of his individuality," was not free from blemishes. It was not without bribery that he obtained the office of Pontifex Maximas—an office which placed him at the head of the state religion—while some

historians do not hesitate to represent him at that time as "a frivolous and abandoned libertine." History, moreover, informs us that in adding to the riches of the state, he was "careful to render his fortune more secure." In arrogating to himself the sovereign titles which a cringing and officious Senate was anxious to bestow on him, he showed a degree of avidity which does not redound to his credit. His military campaigns, again, which have been rightly regarded as the finest congeries of victories that the world has ever witnessed, were not invariably marked by that scrupulous regard for life which qualifies the character of a great general with the epithet "complete."

Napoleon's character is too well-known to need comment. About the grandeur of his towering individuality there can be no two opinions. He flashed like a tremendous meteor, and left a trail of dazzling glory withersoever he darted in the course of his eventful and stormy life. But posterity cannot think of him otherwise than as an ambitious adventurer plotting to dominate the whole world with his dogmatic will—here capturing an empire only to bestow it upon a favourite relation, and there hurling a splendid army of hundreds of thousands to eternity simply to gratify a whim.

Of Peter it is said that "all Russia seems but the monument of this strange colossal man." But can all his fame wash away the stigma thrown upon his

character by his execution of his own son Alexis, who succumbed to the most excruciating tortures at his orders, simply because the wretched young man opposed the autocratic will of his imperial father.

Fredrick the Great of Prussia, although such an enlightened monarch, had an absolute will which none could dare dispute. To use the words of an eminent writer, he had a "cruel art." He would say anything to gratify his own sense of humour but could not tolerate freedom of speech in others.

Justinian does not fare any better. Honesty, which ought to rank foremost among the moral qualities of a great man, was wanting in him. As a rule he selected capable ministers, but they were not usually honest. His great coadjutor Tribunion, who helped him in consolidating and abridging the Roman Law, "labours under the reproach of corruption," while the fact that "Justinian maintained John of Cappadocia in power, long after his greed, his unscrupulousness and the excesses of his private life had excited the anger of the whole empire," reflects little credit on his own principles of government and sense of duty to his subjects.

I am afraid I shall be accused of presuming to criticize the character of persons whose greatness far surpasses the defects to which they were liable. I beg, however, to assure my readers that the above criticism has not detracted, in the slightest degree,

from the respect which I bear and owe to these great men. My object is simply to furnish a contrast between them and Omar. True greatness can only exist where the character is complete in relation to life; but as such a thing cannot be expected of human beings, comparison between person and person assumes a relative form. Starting my comparison, therefore, from the principle of relativity, I maintain that not one of the defects which have been pointed out in some of the greatest notabilities of the past age, can be detected in Omar. His individuality presents one of those rare instances in the History of Man in which the temporal greatness vied with the sacerdotal. In him the strictest principles of the recognized code of moral rectitude were blended with the activities of a colossal genius which was capable of swaying the world. In what light can a person be regarded who, being a ruler over millions of men, carried water on his back for the meanest of his subjects; who being the arbitrator of the destinies of Arabia, Egypt, Asia Minor and Persia, lived like the lowliest of his people —partaking of frugal fare and clad in the humblest dress; who, being a monarch to whom Emperors did homage, shared his dromedary by turns with his slave.

Gibbon in his immortal work *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1890 ed., Vol. V., p. 400) says of him:

" Yet the abstinence and humility of Omar were not inferior to the virtues of Abubeker: his food

consisted of barley-bread or dates; his drink was water; he preached in a gown that was torn or tattered in twelve places; and a Persian satrap, who paid his homage to the conqueror, found him asleep among the beggars on the steps of the mosch (mosque) of Medina. Economy is the source of liberality, and the increase of the revenue enabled Omar to establish a just and perpetual reward for the past and present services of the faithful. Careless of his own emolument, he assigned to Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet, the first and most ample allowance of twenty-five thousand drachms or pieces of silver. Five thousand were allotted to each of the aged warriors, the relics of the field of Beder, and the last and the meanest of the companions of Mahomet was distinguished by the annual reward of three thousand pieces........... Under his reign and that of his predecessor, the conqueror of the East were the trusty servants of God and the people; the mass of the public treasure was consecrated to the expenses of peace and war; a prudent mixture of justice and bounty maintained the discipline of the Saracens, and they united, by a rare felicity, the despatch and execution of despotism with the equal and frugal maxims of a republican government."

Sir William Muir says:*

"Omar's life requires but few lines to sketch. Simplicity and duty were his guiding principles,

* *The Caliphate, Rise, Decline and Fall*, pp. 190-91, 1924 edition.

impartiality and devotion the leading features of his administration. Responsibility so weighed upon him that he was heard to exclaim: 'O that my mother had not borne me; would that I had been this stalk of grass instead!' In early life of a fiery and impatient temper, he was known, even in the later days of the Prophet, as the stern advocate of vengeance. Ever ready to unsheath the sword, it was he that at Bedr advised that the prisoners should all be put to death. But age, as well as office, had now mellowed this asperity. His sense of justice was strong. And except it be the treatment of Khalid, whom according to some accounts he pursued with an ungenerous resentment, no act of tyranny or injustice is recorded against him; and even in this matter, his enmity took its rise in Khalid's unscrupulous treatment of a fallen foe. The choice of his captains and governors was free from favouritism and (Al-Moghira and Ammár excepted) singularly fortunate. The various tribes and bodies in the empire, representing diverse interests, reposed in his integrity implicit confidence, and his strong arm maintained the discipline of law and empire.... Whip in hand, he perambulated the streets and markets of Medina ready to punish the offenders on the spot; and so the proverb....'Omar's whip is more terrible than another's sword.' But with all this he was tender-hearted, and numberless acts of kindness are recorded of him, such as relieving the wants of the widow and the fatherless."

Washington Irving says:*

"The whole history of Omar shows him to have been a man of great powers of mind, inflexible integrity, and rigid justice. He was more than any one else, the founder of the Islamic empire; confirming and carrying out the inspirations of the Prophet; aiding Abu Beker with his counsels during his brief Caliphate; and establishing wise regulations for the strict administration of the law throughout the rapidly-extending bounds of the Moslem conquests. The rigid hand which he kept upon his most popular generals in the midst of their armies, and in the most distant scenes of their triumphs, gives signal evidence of his extraordinary capacity to rule. In the simplicity of his habits, and his contempt for all pomp and luxury, he emulated the example of the Prophet and Abu Beker. He endeavoured incessantly to impress the merit and policy of the same in his letters to his generals. 'Beware,' he would say, 'of Persian luxury both in food and raiment. Keep to the simple habits of your country, and Allah will continue you victorious; depart from them and he will reverse your fortunes.' It was his strong conviction of the truth of this policy, which made him so severe in punishing all ostentatious style and luxurious indulgence in his officers.

"Some of his ordinances do credit to his heart as well as his head. He forbade that any female

*_Lives of the Successors of Mahomet_, pp. 281-82, 1850 edition.

captive who had borne a child should be sold as a slave. In his weekly distributions of the surplus money of his treasury, he proportioned them to the wants, not the merits of the applicants. 'God,' said he, 'has bestowed the good things of this world to relieve our necessities, not to reward our virtues: those will be rewarded in another world.'"

The following is an extract from the *Encyclopædia Britannica*:

"To Omar's ten years' caliphate belong, for the most part, the great conquests. He himself did not take the field, but remained in Medina; he never, however, suffered the reins to slip from his grasp, so powerful was the influence of his personality and the Moslem community of feeling. His political insight is shown by the fact that he endeavoured to limit the indefinite extension of Moslem conquest, to maintain and strengthen the national Arabian character of the commonwealth of Islam; also by making it his foremost task to promote law and order in its internal affairs. The saying with which he began his reign will never grow antiquated: 'By God, he that is weakest among you shall be in my sight the strongest, until I have vindicated for him his rights; but him that is strongest will I treat as the weakest, until he complies with the law.' It would be impossible to give a better general definition of the function of the State."

If I were to go on reproducing the sketches

which many a Western author has drawn of Omar's character, I am afraid, this Preface would swell into a ponderous tome. I am therefore forced, for the sake of brevity, to relinquish a pleasant task, and leave it for the admirers of the hero of this work to refer to the works of such writers as Springer, Weil, Dozy and Von Kremer. I must add this much, however, that history bears unqualified testimony to the greatness of Omar, and there is not a single observation in any part of it which might detract from the pre-eminent grandeur of this colossal man in every walk of life.

I have undertaken the translation of this work with the object of bringing before the English-reading public the life of a man with whose history they are not acquainted to the extent to which his greatness entitles him. As a unique figure which has made history, Omar has upon the attention of scholars a claim which cannot be lightly set aside, and to professor Shibli is due the credit for originally bringing out in the Urdu language a biography of the great caliph which is as comprehensive as could have been desired. Professor Shibli (Shams-ul-Ulema) is a distinguished member of that enlightened group of Indian Musalmans whose leader was the late Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, K.C.S.I., the founder of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh. He is a profound Arabic scholar and is thoroughly conversant with the annals of early

Islam. But he will be better introduced to the English-reading public as the original author of this work.

My thanks are due to Shams-ul-Ulema Syed Ali Belgrami, B.A., B.L., etc., Secretary to H. E. H. the Nizam's Government in the Public Works Department, at whose instance I commenced this translation, and I have reason to be grateful to my respected friend Muhammad Aziz Mirza, Esq., B.A., Member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal and Judicial Secretary to H.E.H. the Nizam's Government whose sustained interest in my secular welfare and literary advancement has made this translation —my principal maiden attempt in the region of English composition—my labour of love a pleasant pastime. Last but not least, I owe a debt of deep obligation to my esteemed friend Mr. J. E. Lee, Personal Assistant to the Judicial Secretary to the Government of H. E. H. the Nizam. From this gentleman, who, if he has not been able to command success, certainly deserves it, I have received the greatest assistance in this task.

10th June, 1900. ZAFAR ALI KHAN

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

"AL-FAROOQ" (of which the present work is a translation) the advent of which was noised abroad throughout India when it was even in embryo was at first incidentally referred to in the Preface to the first edition of the *Life of Mamun.* But although after this casual reference I was reticent as to the coming work, the very name of the work had such a charm about it that it was heralded abroad with surprising rapidity and ere it had gone through its initial stage the title had passed from mouth to mouth through the length and breadth of the land.

In the meantime certain circumstances interrupted the course of this work and I had to take other works in hand. Several treatises were written by me during this interval and were published. Those eyes, however, which were eagerly awaiting a view of the lustrous picture of Omar the Great, could not be satisfied by indulging in a lesser glory. Unfortunately several considerations had well-nigh forced me to relinquish the task from sheer dissatisfaction. But so incessant was the clamour of the literary public of the land for the work that no sooner did I lay down the pen than I was forced to

resume it. At last, on the 18th of August 1894 A.D. I definitely made up my mind and regularly devoted myself to the task. The responsibilities of the professional chair and casual hindrances still impeded my progress, so much so that on several occasions I had to leave the work for many months together. As, however, the interruption was casual, the book progressed slowly but surely until, to-day, after a lapse of full four years the task is completed and the long travelling pen has earned its well deserved rest of a few days.

Thank God the Camel's march to end is brought,
Has reached its destined shore the baroque of thoughts.

The book consists of two parts. The first part, besides the Introduction, deals with the events embracing the life-time of Omar as well as the political conquests achieved by him. The second part is a detailed record of his system of government, political and ecclesiastical, his intellectual attainments and his personal virtues and habits, and it is to this second part that I have devoted the greatest labour and research.

I may here point out that this work is a contribution towards the "Asifiah Series." It is essential, therefore, to understand in the first place, the nature of the "Asifiah Series."

My esteemed and honoured friend Shams-ul-Ulema Moulvi Syed Ali Belgrami, B.A., B.L. etc.

is well-known all over India. As he is a great author, a great translator and a great linguist so is he a great friend of learning and a great patron of all efforts for the propagation of knowledge. This latter virtue induced him to submit to His Excellency the Nawab Muhammad Fazl-ud-Din Khan Sikandar Jang, Iqbal-ud-Daulah, Iqtidar-ul-Mulk, Sir Viqar-ul-Umara Bahadur, K.C.I.E., Prime Minister of the Hyderabad State, a proposal to the effect that it was desirable that a permanent series of literary and scientific translations and original productions entitled the "Asifiah Series" should be organised under the beneficent auspices of Rustam-e-Dauran, Aflatun-e-Zaman, Muzaffar-ud-Daulah, Muzaffar-ul-Mamalik, Nizam-ul-Mulk Asif Jah His Highness Nawab Sir Mir Mahbub Ali Khan Bahadur Fateh Jang, G.C.S.I., Nizam of Hyderabad Deccan, and that such of the writings of those interested in the welfare of the Hyderabad State as may be deemed fit should be included in this series.

His Excellency who has ever manifested a keen interest in the diffusion of the arts and sciences and of which many an appreciable monuments exists at present, very gladly approved of the proposal alluded to above. The auspicious series has accordingly been in existence for several years and our Shams-ul-Ulema's Urdu translation of *Les Civilization des Arabes*, which has earned a world-wide fame, forms a precious pearl in this same string.

In 1896 A.D. His Excellency was pleased to confer upon me a Mansab (or monthly allowance) and in the Sanad making the grant he was also pleased to direct that all my future works should be accepted as contributions to the "Asifiah Series."

It is thus that this humble work forms part of the "Asifiah Series."

At the end of the first volume a map of the Islamic world is given. This map is in different colours showing respectively the conquests achieved during each reign from the time of the Prophet down to the Omayyad epoch, and shows at a glance what part of the globe came within the Islamic sphere of influence during the time of each Caliph. The map was originally prepared by a few German professors. As, however, it does not exactly tally with the statement made in this book, I have referred to the differences in the foot notes wherever I have found it to be necessary.

Azamgarh: SHIBLI NUMANI
December 1898

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Praise be to God the Lord of all the worlds and peace be on His Prophet Muhammad and all his descendants and Companions

THE ELEMENT OF HISTORY

MOST of the arts and sciences which spring up during the course of Civilization are evolved from crude pre-existing materials. During the progress of Civilization these materials assume a definite form and, developing themselves into a systematic whole, acquire a particular name or title. For instance methods of ratiocination and argumentation have existed in all ages, but it was only when Aristotle arranged these particulars in a definite order that they became known by the name of Logic and thus culminated into a positive science. The same may be said of History and Biography. Wherever there was a group of individuals on the globe there were, to be sure, History and Biography to be met, for, in challenging and defying their rivals, men were wont to speak in terms of flowing pride of the glorious records of their ancestors; battles fought and engagements contested in the days of yore necessarily lent an additional charm to their gatherings and conversazione, while old customs and usages were instinc-

tively maintained as relics of their pristine progenitors, and these are the sources from which the treasures of History and Chronicle are replenished. Resting their claims on this basis the Arabs, Persians, Turks, Tartars, Indians, Afghans, Egyptians, Greeks and, in fact, all the nations of the world can affirm that in historical acquisition and legendary lore none of them falls short of the other.

THE IDIOSYNCRASIES OF ARABIA

ARABIA, however, could boast of a peculiar idiosyncrasy in this general connection. The Arabs had precedence over other nations in the possession of certain characteristics, which tended to contribute towards the solidarity of the chain of History. Thus genealogy was their passion. Even a child learnt by rote the genealogical table of his house and forefathers upto the tenth or twelfth degree and his relish for preserving their lineage was so intense that they took to keeping the pedigrees even of their horses and camels. In legendary lore, also, they were well versed and in the annual fair of Ukaz the traditions of national events were passed on from one to the other till thousands and millions became their retentive repositories. Poetry was one of their most favourite pursuits and they devoted so much of their time to cultivate it that in point of elocution the wild Bedouins, illiterate camel herds

though they were, considered all other men as unfit even to kiss the hem of their garments. Indeed they could portray physical feats and mental emotions in such a simple, vivid and realistic manner that no other people have ever excelled or even equalled them in the art.

THE DAWN OF THE SCIENCE OF HISTORY IN ARABIA

THUS it was, that when Civilization dawned on Arabia, the books that were first written were historical works. Long before the advent of Islam the kings of the Hira dynasty caused historical events to be committed to writing, which thus escaped the ravages of time. Ibn Hisham in his book, *Al-Tijan*, speaks of having utilized these works.

The spread of Islam was early marked by accumulation of a store of legends and traditions; but as it was long afterwards that the people took to writing books, no work on History appeared at this particular period; yet when the field of literary composition was once open the first book that appeared was an historical one.

During the reign of Amir Muawiya, who died in the year 60 A.H., there lived one Obaid bin Sharba by name who had seen the days of ignorance, and who knew the events connected with most of the battles fought between Arabia and Persia. This

man was living at Sanaa when Amir Muawiya sent for him and appointed certain writers and amanuenses to take down everything that he chose to dictate. The learned Ibn al-Nadim, in his book, *Kitab al-Fihrist* (Catalogue of Books) has referred to a number of treatises dictated by Obaid. One of these is named *Kitab al-Muluk wa Akhbar al-Maziyyin* (the Book of Kings and the Story of the Ancients). This is presumably identical with the book the manuscript of which was prepared by the order of Amir Muawiya. Next to Obaid ranks Awata ibn al-Hakam (died in the year 147 A.H.) who was skilled in legendary lore as well as in the intricacies of genealogy. Besides contributing to historical topics of general interest, he wrote a book containing the history of the times of the Caliphs of the Ommayya dynasty and of the reign of Amir Muawiya. By the command of Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik, in 117 A.H., the most detailed and exhaustive history of Persia was translated from the Pahlevi language into Arabic. This was the first book that was translated into Arabic from a foreign language.

FIRST BIOGRAPHY OF THE PROPHET

IN the year 143 A.H. when commentaries on the Qur-an, the traditions of the Prophet, and Islamic Jurisprudence began to be systematised and

compiled, standard works on History and Biography also appeared. Muhammad ibn Ishaq (died 151 A.H.), at the express desire of the Abbasi caliph, Mansur, wrote a book containing the events of the life of the Prophet. This book is still extant and the Islamic historians affirm that this is the first historical work in Islam. The fact, however, is that prior to this, Musa ibn Uqba (died 141 A.H.) had committed to writing the incidents of the battles fought by the Prophet. Musa was a very pious and fastidiously cautious person and was a contemporary of the Prophet's Companions. Therefore even among the circle of the traditionists his book meets with marked esteem and respect.

After this, the march of the science of History was rapid and unretarded, and a good many historians of acknowledged repute were given to the world, the most prominent and celebrated names being those of Abu Makhnaf Kalbi and Waqidi. These authors wrote excellent books on useful and new subjects. Thus Kalbi wrote admirable treatises on: "The Armies of Islam"; "The Professions of the Quraish"; "The Controversies Among the Arab Tribes"; "The Coincidence Between the Tenets of Islam and pre-Islamic Dogmas". By degrees this admirable series of books gathered unrestrained amplitude until, at the commencement of the fourth century A.H. a vast treasure of historical research was accumulated, the great beauty being that each

author dealt with a separate subject.

The names of historians who appeared during this period is legion. The following is a short list of the writers whose works contain the incidents of the life of the Prophet and his Companions:

Name of Author	Name of book	Remarks
Buhaih of Medina	The *Ghuzwat Nabawi*	
Nasr ibn Muzaham Kufi	The *Kitab al-Jamal* or the story of the feud between Ali and Ayisha	
Saif ibn Amr al-Asadi	The *Kitab al-Futuh al-Kabir*	A very famous historian
Muammar ibn Rashid Kufi	The *Kitab al-Maghazi*	Imam Bukhari's master's master
Abul-Bakhtari Wahab ibn Wahab	The *Sifat al-Nabi* and the *Fazail al-Ansar*	Died 200 A.H.
Abdulla ibn Saad Zahri	The *Futuhat Khalid ibn Walid*	Died 380 A.H.
Abul-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abdulla of Medina		Wrote numerous books on the lives of the Prophet and the Caliphs under different heads. Died 324 A.H.
Ahmad ibn Haris Khazzaz	The *Kitab al-Maghazi and Asma al-Khulafa wa Kitaibahum*	Was the pupil of Madaini

Name of Author	Name of book	Remarks
Abd al-Rahman ibn Abda	The *Manaqib Quraish*	Was a very truthful and reliable historian
Omar ibn Shibba	The *Umara al-Kufa* and *Umara al-Basra*	A famous historian. Died 262 A.H.

Although these works are not extant now, there are a number of other books written in the same period, or in the period immediately following, which contain considerable information derived from these works. We give below a short description of the titles of these books together with the names of their respective authors.

Abdulla ibn Muslim ibn Qutaiba (born in 213 A.H. and died in 276 A.H.). The fame and authority of this writer are unchallenged. Even the Traditionists are unanimous as to his integrity and trustworthiness. The *Maaraf* is the name of his famous historical work which has been printed and published in Egypt and other places. Although this book is a mere epitome, it contains a good deal of useful information not to be found in more voluminous works.

Ahmad ibn Daud Abu Hanifa Dinawari (died 281 A.H.) is a well-known author. His historical work is entitled *Al-Akhbar al-Tiwaal.* It is a record

of the progress of Islam down to the time of the caliph Mutasim Billah, and contains an exhaustive account of the conquest of Persia. It was printed, for the first time, at Leyden in 1888 A.D.

Muhammad ibn Saad Katib al-Waqidi (died 230 A.H.) is an extremely scrupulous and trustworthy historian. Although his master Waqidi's writings are of doubtful origin as they abound in unauthenticated and controvertible matter, but there is a consensus of opinion that he himself is fastidiously scrupulous about what he writes. He wrote an encyclopædic book in ten or twelve volumes containing an exhaustive account of the Prophet, his Companions, the *Tabiyeen* and the *Taba Tabiyeen.* All the facts related by him are authenticated by positive authority. This book is known by the name of *Tabaqat* Ibn Saad. We have seen its manuscript which is now being printed in Germany with great care.

Ahmad ibn Ali Yaqub ibn Wazih Katib Abbasi is an historian of the third century A.H. We have not found his memoirs in biographical works, but his book itself affords sufficient proof of the fact that he is a writer of eminence. Having been attached to the Abbasi court, he was able to collect valuable historical material. His book, entitled *Tarikh Yaqubi*, was printed at Leyden in the year 1883 A.D.

Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Balazuri (died 279 A.H.) was a pupil of Ibn Saad and a courtier of the Abbasi

caliph al-Mutawakkil Billah. The Traditionists acknowledge the vastness of his information and the correctness of his version. He has two well-known books on history and biography : *Futuh al-Buldan* and *Ansab al-Ashraf*. The arrangement of the former is as follows: He places each province or district situated in the territory of Islam under a separate heading, and gives an account of everything in connection with the same from its early conquest down to his own period. The other book is in the form of a memoir and also contains an account of Omar. The *Futuh al-Buldan* has been printed in Europe with much care, and we came across a manuscript copy of *Ansab al-Ashraf* in Constantinople.

Abu Jaafar Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (died 310 A.H.). Not only in History but in Jurisprudence and *Hadis*, he is acknowledged a leading authority. Hence it is that people have pronounced him a jurist along with the four Imams. On history he wrote a detailed and voluminous book covering thirteen massive volumes. This book has been printed in Leyden with much care.

Abul-Hasan Ali ibn Husain Masudi (died 386 A.H.) is the 'Father of History'. Islam has not produced an historian equal to him in comprehensive information and width of thought. He was also deeply versed in the history of other nations. Had all his historical works been extant, all other

attempts in this direction would have been regarded as superfluous, but it is a pity that owing to the corrupted taste of the Musalman nations most of his books are not extant now. Occidental research has, after considerable scrutiny and labour, been able to discover two of his books, *viz.*, *Muruj al-Zahab* and *Kitab al-Tanbih wa al-Ishraf*. The former has been printed in Egypt.

The time to which these works appertain, may be styled the Classical Period. With the opening of the fifth century (A.H.) commences what may be called the Secondary Period which marks the first retrogressive step in the march of the science of History. Although quite a host of historians flourished in the latter period and among them Ibn al-Asir, Samaani, Zahabi, Abul-Fida, Nuwairi, Suyuti, and others achieved great fame, yet it is a matter for regret that they rendered no service to History as a science. They lacked the characteristics of their predecessors and produced nothing that was new and original. Thus though it was a distinguishing feature of the writers of the Classical Period that every book written by them contained new and useful information hitherto undisclosed, their successors, on the contrary, adopted a totally different course. All they did was to take up some old work and modify, abridge and transform it without contributing any new matter to it. The learned Ibn Khallikan has pronounced the history written

by Ibn al-Asir to be unsurpassed in point of excellence, and there can be no doubt that its universal popularity told heavily against the earlier historical works. But when we compare his description of a particular period with Tabari's account of the same, we do not find a single incident in it which is not also narrated by Tabari. In the same way, subsequent authors clung to Ibn al-Asir and drew all their materials from him. The writers of the Secondary Period committed a further mistake, which was that in abridging the books of the older writers they unfortunately made omissions of the very pith and cream of the events narrated. The second part of the present work furnishes a good many illustrations of such omissions.

It was one of the idiosyncrasies of the writers of the Classical Period that the events they narrated were substantiated by an unbroken chain of positive testimony, exactly in the same manner in which the sayings of the Prophet were traced through the medium of closely transmitted authority. The writers of the Secondary Period entirely gave up this plan. Another distinguishing trait of the historians of the Classical Period was that, although in their books, they did not portray the civilization and social evolution of a particular period under distinct and separate headings, still, in the body of their books, they incidentally mentioned such particulars as cast some light on the cultural and social progress of that

age. Their successors did not maintain even this feature.

The name of Ibn Khaldun, however, escapes this general censure. He laid the foundations of the art of the philosophy of history of which not only the historians of the Secondary Period but the entire Muslim world might well be proud. Similarly, his pupil, the learned Maqrizi, deserves praise and commendation rather than the stern rebuke of criticism.

At any rate the works of these classical authors constitute the only source from which the materials for the compilation of the *Life of Omar the Great* could have been derived. The fact, however, is that, in view of the progress chieved by the art of History and Biography, even these priceless treasures cannot be of much use. To understand this, a knowledge of the nature of the science of History is first of all essential.

An eminent author has thus defined history:

"The changes wrought by the course of nature in the condition of man, and the influence exerted by man over his natural environments, together constitute history." Another thinker gives the following definition: "History is the tracing of those events and conditions which show the manner in which the Present sprang from the Past as an effect." As the civilization and social systems, the ideas and impressions, and the religious orders which

exist in the world at present, are the natural effects of past events History is the investigation of those past events and their arrangement in such an order as will admit of a delineation of the manner in which each present event resulted from the chain of past events.

THE REQUISITES OF HISTORY

ACCORDING to the above definitions two things are absolutely necessary for history.

Firstly, the account of a particular period should comprehend events and incidents of every description—cultural, social, ethical and religious.

Secondly, the chain of cause and effect must be traced in recounting all events.

DEFECTS IN OLD HISTORICAL WORKS AND THEIR CAUSES

THE old historical works are lacking in both the above mentioned requisites. They hardly touch upon the morals and manners, culture and social conditions of the people. Only the events of the life of the ruler of the day are described, but even these events are nothing more than an account of conquests and civil wars. This defect is not limited to Islamic histories alone. All Asiatic histories run in the same style, which is justified by the fact

that Asia had, from time immemorial, been the seat of absolute monarchies, and the grandeur and dogmatic authority of the ruler of the day used to overrule every other consideration. This necessarily meant that the pages of History should contain nothing but accounts of the royal grandeur and glory, and, as in that age laws and statutes were only other names for the arbitrary mandates and unrestrained commands of the Sovereign, it was deemed little short of futile to attempt to record even the principles of Government and the system of Administration.

The main cause that led to the disregard of the chain of causality in the analysis of events was that, as a rule, writers of History were ignorant of Philosophy and the rational sciences, and they could not, therefore, think of the principles of the Philosophy of History and their working. Hence it is that in works of Biography and Tradition, *Hadis* had always the better of ratiocination throughout; in fact the employment of the ratiocinative method was nominal. Towards the close of the Secondary Period Ibn Khaldun laid the foundation stone of the Philosophy of History and formulated its principles and canons, but he had no time to utilize these principles in his own History. After this began the period of incessant literary decay for the Muslims and no one ever troubled himself about these matters.

One of the potent influences which have contributed towards retarding the development of the science of History, not only among Musalmans but also among other nations, may be thus described:

The events narrated in History are correlated to the different arts and sciences. Thus martial events relate to the art of Strategy and Tactics, administrative matters to Jurisprudence, moral narrations to Ethics and so on. If the historian is well versed in all these branches of knowledge, he can deal with the events from a scientific point of view, otherwise it is evident that he will handle the subject only as a man in the street would. This may be illustrated by pointing out that if a man of letters, to whom the art of Engineering is a sealed book, were to come across a fine building he would no doubt be able to give such a glowing description of the edifice as to impress upon his readers the magnificence, the spaciousness or outward beauty and charm of the structure; but his description will be found wanting in a delineation of the scientific principles and niceties of the art of Engineering on which the structure is based. Hence it is that the study of thousands of pages of history, teeming with descriptions of battles and warfare, adds very little to our information on the principles of Strategy.

The accounts of administrative affairs are injudicial throughout, because the historians themselves were not initiated in the mysteries of law. If, by

a stroke of good luck, the science of History had remained to be canvassed by those who, besides a knowledge of History, were read in the allied sciences of Strategy, Jurisprudence, Political Science and Ethics, there is no knowing what progress History would have made to-day.

CRITERION OF THE ACCURACY OF EVENTS

FROM the above contention it will be seen that the old historical works are wanting in completeness and do not embrace all the important and necessary events, while the arrangement of the events which are described is such that the sequence of cause and effect cannot be traced. There is, however, another important point of issue in this connection which may be resolved into the question, " How far can the correctness and accuracy of the events narrated be trusted ? " There are only two methods of testing the accuracy of an event: Tradition and Ratiocination.

Tradition means that the account of an event is conveyed through the medium of the individual who was a personal witness of that event; that the chain of tradition can be closely traced down from this individual to the last narrator, and that the trustworthiness and veracity of the several narrators have been minutely enquired into, tested and established.

Ratiocination signifies the rational criticism of an event.

The Muslims might well feel proud of the fact that they have surpassed every other nation of the World in bringing the traditional lore to a high pitch of perfection. With a view to verifying traditions of every description, they left no stone unturned in their efforts to trace the transmitted and uninterrupted chain of authority, and after careful sifting and investigation of details as to the life and character of the narrators, they resolved it into a separate and permanent art which is known by the name of *Rijal* (Biography of the Authorities). This care and labour was at first brought into use in the collection and systematisation of the sayings of the Prophet; but history also benefited by it. All the events related in *Tabari*, *Futuh al-Buldan*, *Tabaqat* of Ibn Saad and other works are based on closely transmitted authority. European historians have brought history to a high degree of perfection at the present day, but they are far behind Musalmàn historians in this respect. They are perfectly indifferent as to the veracity and trustworthiness or otherwise of an annalist which betrays complete ignorance of the art of Criticism.

RATIOCINATION

THE laws of ratiocination were not unknown and

Ibn Hazm, Ibn al-Qayim, Khattabi and Ibn Abd al-Barr applied these rules in sifting and substantiating several traditions, but the fact is that this science did not make the progress which it should have while it was hardly applied to history. The learned Ibn Khaldun, who flourished in the Eighth century (A.H.) however, formulated the laws of ratiocination in a masterly manner when laying the foundations of the Philosophy of History. In the introduction to his book he says:

"Mistakes are likely to occur if mere tradition is depended upon in judging the merits of an event, if no heed is paid to the laws of Nature, the character of Culture, and the circumstances of human intercourse; and if the present is not judged in the light of the past."

The learned author quoted above has further explained that in order to discover the truth of an event it is not expedient to trouble oneself at the very outset with the veracity and trustworthiness or otherwise of the narrator. On the contrary, it should at first be ascertained whether the event itself lies within the pale of possibility, for, if the event is not possible the veracity of the narrator is useless. Ibn Khaldun has also pointed out that possibility in such instances does not signify logical possibility but that which is possible in accordance with the laws of Nature and Society.

It now remains to be seen how far we might in

this work venture to supply the deficiencies pointed out in the old historical works.

It is perfectly true that the books containing the memoirs of Omar do not furnish complete information on all important points. But there are other works in which these defects are remedied. Thus *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya* by Al-Mawardi; *Muqaddama* of Ibn Khaldun and *Kitab al-Kharaj* throw a great deal of light on Omar's system of government and administration. The *Akhbar al-Quzzat* by Muhammad ibn Khalf al-Wakee shows, in particular, the working of the judicial system under him. The *Kitab al-Awail* by Abi Hilal al-Askari and *Majalis al-Wasail ila Akhbar al-Awail* are records of the institutions introduced by him. The *Iqd al-Farid* and the *Kitab al-Bayan wa al-Tabyeen* by Jahiz contain all his speeches and sermons. The *Kitab al-Umda* by Ibn Rashiq of Qairwan shows his poetic taste. Madaini in his *Kitab al-Amsal* has given Omar's philosophic maxims and apophthegms. Ibn al-Jauzi in his *Sirat al-Omarain* has dwelt upon his habits of life and character. Last, but not least, Shah Wali-Allah in his *Izalat al-Khifa* has discussed Omar's juridical and legal capabilities in such a learned manner as to leave no scope for any addition.

All these books we have gone through and utilized. The *Riyaz al-Nazra* of Muhibb al-Tabari also contains an exhaustive account of the life of Omar

and Shah Wali-Allah has drawn his materials from the same. We have, however, purposely refrained from making use of this book as it teems with spurious and unauthenticated traditions.

The rules of ratiocination are of great help in investigating and sifting the truth of events. These rules have now been systematically formulated and the following are those which we can best utilize.

1. Whether the event in question is possible according to the laws of Nature?
2. Whether the general tendency of the people in the period in which the event occurred was in harmony or incompatible with its occurrence?
3. Whether the strength of the testimony in support of the event is proportionate to the abnormality of the said event, if it happens to be extraordinary?
4. How far the narrator has had recourse to conjecture and presumption in his description of the incident which he gives as a matter of fact?
5. Whether the form in which the narrator has related the event is a perfect impression of it, or whether the presumption is that he has not been able to show all the sides of the picture and has failed to delineate all the features of the event?
6. To calculate the degree and nature of the

changes wrought in the tradition by the lapse of time and the different systems of rehearsal adopted by different narrators.

No one can question the accuracy or correctness of these rules and many a hidden secret might be disclosed through their medium. Thus all the books of History extant to-day contain Omar's very strict laws regarding the non-Muslim nationalities. But when it is remembered that these histories were written during a period when fanaticism had taken strong hold of the Muslim world, and when, along with this, we go through the writings of the Classical Period in which we do not find any incident of this kind, or when we do find them, they are extremely rare, we are driven to the conclusion that with the march of the forces of fanaticism the version of traditions grew spontaneously distorted. It is mentioned in all the histories that Omar had issued an order to the effect that Christians should on no account ring the church bells. The old writings, however, (*i.e.*, *Kitab al-Kharaj*, *Tarikh Tabari*, etc.) mention the incident with this reservation that Christians were not to ring the church bells when Musalmans were saying their prayers. Ibn al-Asir and others say that Omar had passed an order that Christian families of the Taghlab tribe should not baptize their children. In Tabari's History the same tradition is thus worded: "The children of those who have embraced the Islamic faith should not be

forcibly baptized."

Similarly, in many books of History, it is stated that with a view to humiliating and slighting the Christians, Omar compelled them to wear garments of a particular fashion. On going deeply into the matter, however, the bare fact appears to be that although Omar had directed the Christians to wear garments of a particular fashion, the idea of contempt and slight is but the suggestion of the narrator. This matter will be fully discussed hereafter.

Moreover, those traditions which, in addition to their historical importance, also possess religious significance, clearly show that the more carefully they were analysed the more were the doubtful and equivocal elements eliminated. For example, the accounts of "*Fadak*", "*Qirtas*", "*Saqifa Bani Saada*" have all been given by Ibn Asakir, Ibn Saad, Baihaqi, Muslim and Bukhari, but the traditions in regard to these events appear to have been cleared of their uncertain and debatable elements in proportion to the degree in which these authors differ in point of exactitude, minuteness and circumspection. This variance is plainly visible even between Muslim and Bukhari, and we intend discussing this subject in its proper place subsequently.

The degree of the credibility and accuracy of events must also be determined in accordance with the rationalistic principles laid down. For instance, it is an admitted fact that, the events of the Cali-

phate of Omar were recorded a century afterwards. From this we may draw the inference that minute details of war such as the marshalling of troops, the battle array, the interchange of taunts between the antagonists of the belligerent hosts, the feats of arms of individual warriors, the manœuvres of the combatants, can hardly claim our unqualified credence. On the other hand administrative matters and rules of government continued to exist in an appreciable form, during a prolonged interval, and, therefore, incidents narrated in regard to them are undoubtedly worthy of belief. The laws and regulations promulgated by Akbar in India are common talk down to the present day and their accuracy is undisputed. This is not because, like *Hadis*, they are backed up by definite authority, but because those laws and regulations remained in force in India for a long time and the name of Akbar tended to establish their celebrity.

The presumption in regard to those orations and apophthegms of Omar which are extant is that such portions of them as are conspicuous by their impressiveness and eloquence must needs be genuine, because, as a rule, the exceptionally stirring and striking expressions of an eloquent public speaker necessarily takes hold of the public mind and becomes the topic of conversation for long afterwards. Similarly, those portions of Omar's orations are certainly reliable which contain references to the

precepts of the *Shari'a* (Muslim Law), because such matters were carefully preserved by the people as elements of jurisprudence.

With regard to events which, notwithstanding their being out of harmony with the taste and tendency of the age, are still touched upon, it should be understood that in describing such events the writers have failed to do sufficient justice to it. Thus our historians possess greater aptitude for portraying the exciting scenes of the battle-field and the festive hall, than for toiling over the dull and insipid description of administrative affairs. Therefore when, in spite of this, events relative to the administration of justice, the police, land settlement, census and kindred subjects are incidentally mentioned, we are forced to the conclusion that what has been described is far less than what must have been omitted. The piety, sanctity, asperity and inflexibility of Omar form the subject of innumerable traditions, and no doubt these virtues were possessed by him in a greater measure than by the rest of the Companions of the Prophet. All those traditions, however, which are mentioned in the *Hilyat al-Aulia*, the writings of Ibn al-Asakir, the *Kanz al-Ammal*, the *Riyaz al-Nazra* and other books of this kind, should not be received with uniform credulity. On the contrary, it should be remembered that, inasmuch as the recital of such tales usually lent a charm to social assemblages, and

the audience listened to them with eager attention, they were unconsciously tinged with the colour of extravagance. This is corroborated by the fact that only a limited number of such traditions is found in more authentic and trustworthy works. We have, therefore, observed the utmost precaution in making references to such traditions in this work and have altogether disregarded the traditions mentioned in the *Riyaz al-Nazra*, the writings of Ibn al-Asakir, the *Hilyat al-Aulia* and other books of the same type.

HISTORICAL STYLE

IN conclusion something must be said of the style. The best historical works of the modern age, which have acquired wide popularity, are an admixture of literature and philosophy and this is a style than which none can be more congenial to the public taste. The fact, however, is that there is nothing common between History and Letters. The line of demarcation separating these two may be likened to that between a map and a picture. The draftsman in drawing the map of a particular piece of land has to minutely represent its form, figure, direction, latitude, longitude, boundaries and divisions. The artist, on the other hand, reveals or prominently portrays only such features of the image selected by him as stand out in striking contrast to the rest,

and touch the emotional chord of human nature. Thus a historian in describing the story of Rustam and Suhrab will simply relate the plain facts of the event in their entirety, while a writer of romance will depict these facts in such a manner as to produce a vivid and lively impression of the injured and helpless attitude of Suhrab and of the mortification and misery of Rustam and, at the same time, will delineate the pathos of the scene so that the other details of the event escape notice although they are not absent.

It is the primary function of an historian not to outstrip the bounds of a plain reporter. The greatest historical writer that modern Europe has produced and who is the originator of the current style is Ranke. An eminent man of letters has thus eulogized him: "He has not employed sentiment in History. He has neither shown patriotism towards the land of his birth nor partiality towards his creed and nation. His description of an event is absolutely unbiased by personal predilections and private views."

It is expedient in this connection to point out that although we have made every possible effort to trace the chain of causality in describing events, yet we have refrained from the inordinate excess of which European authors are guilty. In tracing the chain of cause and effect, an historian often comes across a missing link to supply which there is no

other alternative but to bring conjecture and private judgment to bear. It is, however, his bounden duty not to interpolate conjecture and private judgment into the event in such a way as to preclude the possibility of an analysis. European writers, with a view to making an event consistent with their own opinion, are in the habit of relating the same in such a manner that the event is completely cast in the mould of their private judgment, and nobody can distinguish the event from the author's conjectures and comments.

With regard to the arrangement and style of this book some points are noticeable:

1. Certain events are to be looked upon from different points of view and may be treated under different heads. Such events have unavoidably recurred in the book, but we have made it a point to observe that the particular heading under which the event is narrated should set forth in perfect detail its relation to that event.

2. References to books are mostly made in the case of events which have any claim to enquiry and possess any exceptional merit.

3. In quoting a tradition references to books like the *Izalat al-Khifa* and the *Riyaz al-Nazra*, etc., the authenticity of which is not recognized among the standard works of *Hadis*, are only made where the authority of other trustworthy books has been brought to bear on that particular tradition.

Here, in short, is the fruit of many years' labour and research which is now laid before my co-religionists:

Awhile my lips did seals of silence close,
Meanwhile what kept me occupied who knows:
I gazed with rapture on an image fair,
To you I now reveal its beauty rare.

The revelry endured the livelong day
And its effects have scarcely passed away,
When up I rise and in the goblet pour
A fiery potion stronger than before.

From Jesus whose breath could animate the dead
Resuscitations secret I have read,
Therefore it is once more my heart's desire
With purpose noble, Fancy to inspire.

A comrade asked me: "Pray companion mine,
Deduce philosophy from laws divine;"
Forthwith I took the hint and 'gan to say
The words that came from Godhead straight away.

The hidden secrets of the days of yore
No one attempted ever to explore:
I tore the mask that hid them and revealed
What, else, would have for ages been unsealed.

I trod the path of letters night and day
And showered glittering pearls across my way,
So that in Fancy's realm might now be seen
"Full many a gem of purest ray serene".

CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE AND TRAINING

THE pedigree of Omar may be thus traced: Omar the son of Khattab, the son of Nufail, the son of Abd al-Uzza, the son of Ribah, the son of Abdulla, the son of Qurat, the son of Zurah, the son of Adi, the son of Kaab, the son of Lovayy the son of Fahr, the son of Malik.

The people of Arabia are mostly the descendants of Adnan or of Qahtan, and the descent of the former may be traced to Ismail. Removed to the eleventh degree from Adnan, Fahr, the son of Malik, was a personage of great influence and power, and the famous tribe of Quraish are his descendants. Ten individuals acquired great eminence among the Quraish on account of their strong capabilities and were the founders of a like number of separate clans which were named after them. These were Hashim, Ommayya, Naufal, Abd al-Dar, Asad, Taim, Makhzum, Adi, Jamah, and Samah. Omar is a descendant of Adi in the direct line. Adi had a brother named Marra who is an ancestor of the Prophet. It may thus be seen that the respective lines of descent of Omar and the Prophet converge towards the eighth degree.

The Quraish were the keepers of the Kaaba and thus in addition to worldly grandeur and glory the halo of ecclesiastical superiority also encircled them. Their extensive relations and vast transactions resulted in the growth of several departments of their business and the functions appertaining to each department were separately carried out. These functions consisted in the supervision of the Kaaba, the protection of pilgrims, the conduct of diplomacy, the nomination of patriarchs, the administration of justice, the convening of the Council of Elders, etc. Omar's ancestor Adi was the head of the diplomatic department, that is, whenever the Quraish had to negotiate with any other clan on a political question he used to represent the interests of his tribe in the capacity of an ambassador.* He was also appointed arbitrator in the contests of the Munafira. It was a custom in Arabia to depute some fit and competent person to adjudicate between two contending chieftains of equal status who laid their respective claims for priority over each other before him. These feuds were sometimes prolonged for months together. It was essential that arbitrators nominated to settle these disputes should be men who, besides possessing tact and judgment, were powerful and eloquent speakers. Both these offices had become hereditary among the descendants of Adi.

*Details are mentioned in *Iqd al-Farid.*

OMAR'S GRANDFATHER

NUFAIL BIN ABD AL-UZZA, the grandfather of Omar, maintained the ancestral traditions in performing these duties with the utmost ability. Hence it was that the enviable task of pronouncing judgments in suits of litigants of the highest rank devolved upon him. When a feud arose between Abd al-Muttalib, the grandfather of the Prophet, and Harab bin Ommayya over the leadership of the tribe both accepted Nufail as arbitrator. Nufail pronounced his decision in favour of Abd al-Muttalib and addressed Harab in the following words:

> " Why do you pick up a quarrel with a person who is taller than you in stature; more imposing than you in appearance; more refined than you in intellect; whose progeny outnumber yours and whose generosity outshines yours in lustre. Do not, however, construe this into any disparagement of your good qualities which I highly appreciate. You are as gentle as a lamb, you are renowned throughout Arabia for the stentorian tones of your voice and you are a hardy chip of the old block of your tribe."

ZAID, COUSIN OF OMAR

NUFAIL had two sons: Amr and Khattab. Amr did not rise above the ordinary level of his age but his son Zaid, who was Nufail's grandson and Omar's

cousin, was a man of parts and towered high above his countrymen in nobility of mind. He was a member of that distinguished band of men who, even before the advent of the Prophet, had given up idolatry from their own conviction, and become unitarians. The names of others who belonged to this group besides Zaid,* are Qis bin Saad and Warqa bin Naufal.

Zaid openly anathematised idolatry and heaped contumely on the customs then in vogue among his people to their very face. Moreover, he induced his countrymen to accept the faith of Abraham. These things turned the people against him and the most energetic and unrelenting of his enemies was Khattab the father of Omar. Khattab gave him so much trouble that at last he was compelled to escape from Mecca and take up his abode in the mountain cave of Hira. Occasionally, however, he paid clandestine visits to the Kaaba from his solitary retreat. Poems of Zaid are extant to the present day and throw light on the purity of his soul and conscientious search after Truth. The following two couplets are by him:

Shall I a single deity adore
Or sink in awe, a thousand gods, before?
The idols Lat and Uzza I ignore
A wise and cautious man can do no more.

---

*A complete account of Zaid will be found in *Usd al-Ghaba*, *Kitab al-Awail* and *Al-Maarif* of Ibn Qutaiba.

OMAR'S FATHER KHATTAB

KHATTAB, the father of Omar, was among the prominent members of the Quraish tribe.* The clans of Adi and Banu Abd al-Shams had, for many generations, been opposed to each other and the latter invariably had the better of the feud in consequence of its superior numbers. The entire clan of Adi, including Khattab, was forced as a last resort to seek refuge with the friendly Banu Sahm. When their opponents still threatened them with an attack, Khattab composed the following verses:

> What! shall the vaunting Abu Amr
> E'en now dare threaten me?
> When other men of mettle true—
> The pride of chivalry—
> Espouse our cause. In halls of Sahm
> A band of warriors sit,
> Whose hospitable portals aye,
> The refugees admit.

In his *History of Mecca* the learned Arzaqi gives the whole of this poem, which consists of eight couplets. The entire clan of Adi was residing at Safa in Mecca, but on entering into relations with the Banu Sahm, they sold their dwellings to the latter. Khattab, however, still retained several houses in Safa of which one was ultimately inherited by

* *Al-Maarif* of Ibn Qutaiba.

Omar. This house was situated midway between Safa and Marwa. During his caliphate Omar had it dismantled and turned into a camping ground for pilgrims, but certain shops belonging to it were long retained by his descendants.*

Khattab contracted several marriages with women of noble families and, Omar's mother, Khantama was the daughter of Hisham ibn al-Mughira. Mughira was a personage of such high rank that, when the Quraish declared war against any other clan, he was invariably trusted with the duty of marshalling the troops and leading them to battle. For this reason he was called the *Sahib al-Ainna* (Marshal). The redoubtable Khalid was the grandson of the self-same Mughira. Mughira's son Hisham, the maternal grandfather of Omar, was also a prominent person.

BIRTH OF OMAR

ACCORDING to an authentic tradition Omar was born forty years before the Flight of the Prophet. The account of his birth and early age is not known. Hafiz ibn Asakir, in his *History of Damascus* ascribes a tradition to Amr ibn As, who relates that as he was enjoying the society of a few friends at a festival gathering they suddenly heard a noise

* *Tarikh Mecca* of al-Marzaqi.

and on enquiry it was ascertained that a son had been born to Khattab. It may be inferred from this that Omar's birth was the occasion of unwonted rejoicings. We are in the dark as to the particulars of Omar's adolescence which is not strange, for how could anybody foresee that the young man was one day to become 'Omar the Great'. However, after much investigation and research we have been able to glean something on the subject which we give below:

When Omar attained majority, his father Khattab set him to the task of grazing camels. This occupation bore no stigma in Arabia; on the contrary it was the favourite national calling. But Khattab was unrelenting in his treatment of Omar. All day long he made his son graze camels and if the poor lad wanted to take a little rest, when tired, he was mercilessly belaboured by Khattab. The desert plains which formed the scene of these irksome labours of Omar is called Zajnan, and is situated at a distance of about ten miles from Qudaid near Mecca. In after days, when he was Caliph, Omar once happened to pass this way. He was greatly moved and in a voice husky with emotions he said, "Gracious Heavens! there was a time when I used to roam about this desert as a camel-herd, wearing a felt jacket, and whenever I sat down tired, my father would beat me. Now there is a time when I acknowledge none save God

as my superior." *

As a youth, Omar betook himself to those noble pursuits the cultivation of which was generally in vogue among the patrician orders of Arabia. The arts in which instruction was given in Arabia at this period, and which were regarded as the indispensable appurtenances of the nobility, were genealogy, soldiering, athletic exercises and public speaking—matchless skill in tracing genealogical tables was the hereditary gift of the house of Omar. Jahiz in his book, *Al-Bayan wa al-Tabyeen*,† has dwelt at much length on the genealogical attainments of Omar, his father Khattab and his grandfather Nufail. This may presumably be attributed to the fact that, as already pointed out by us, the dual office of undertaking embassies and pronouncing judgments in cases of *Munafira* had become hereditary in the house of Omar, and in order that the holder of these offices should perform in a befitting manner the duties connected therewith, it was absolutely necessary for him to be well versed in tracing the various ancestral lines. Omar acquired skill in tracing genealogy from his father, and Jahiz writes to say that whenever Omar had occasion to trace the descent of any particular family he invariably quoted the authority of his father.

As an athlete and a wrestler Omar also bore the palm, and in the arena of Ukaz he used to

* *Tabaqat* of Ibn Saad. † Egyptian Ed., pages 117 and 122

enter into wrestling matches which redounded to his credit. Ukaz was a place in the vicinity of the Arafat hills where an annual fair was held in order that the votaries of the different arts should resort to it from all parts of Arabia and display their respective feats of skill. Only those persons, therefore, could be admitted into the lists who claimed perfection in any art. Nabigha Zubyani, Hasan ibn Sabit, Qis ibn Saada and Khansa whose poetic genius and eloquence in the art of public speaking were unanimously acknowledged throughout Arabia, had been trained in this very seminary. The learned Balazuri, in his book *Kitab al-Ashraf*, narrates an authenticated tradition to the effect that Omar was accustomed to go in for wrestling matches in the arena of Ukaz. This justifies the inference that Omar had attained perfection in the art of wrestling. His claim to equestrian skill is also well established. Jahiz writes that Omar used literally to spring on to his horse's back and his seat was so firm that he appeared to be part and parcel of the horse he rode.

No direct evidence is forthcoming with regard to Omar's capacity as a public speaker, but all historians agree that, prior to his conversion to Islam, the Quraish had invested him with the ambassadorial office, and only that person could be so invested who possessed exceptional qualifications as an orator and was also gifted with an uncommon degree of tact and judgment.

In the second part of this book we have expatiated on Omar's excellent taste for poetry which made his memory a repository of the choicest verses of all the famous poets. This points to the inference that he must have cultivated this taste in the lyceum of Ukaz, for, after embracing Islam, he was so much engrossed in religious matters that such pursuits had no more charms for him.

In the meantime Omar had learnt the art of reading and writing and this was a qualification which very few possessed in that age. The learned Balazuri writes on positive authority that at the time of the advent of the Prophet there were only seventeen persons in the whole clan of Quraish who could read and write, and Omar, the son of Khattab, was one of them.*

After attaining perfection in the arts above mentioned, Omar betook himself to earn a livelihood. Trade afforded the readiest means of meeting this end in Arabia at the period. He, therefore, devoted his time and energies to this pursuit and to it may be attributed his great advancement. He travelled to distant lands with the object of trade and paid visits to distinguished and eminent personages. The virtues of self-respect, broad mindedness, experience and tact which he had acquired, even before his conversion to Islam, may, all of them, be attributed to these journeys. The accounts of his

* *Futuh al-Buldan.*

journeys must have been of absorbing interest and vital importance but it is a matter for regret that no historian showed sufficient curiosity to make these the subject of his research. The learned Masudi in his famous book, *Muruj al-Zahab,* makes only the following allusion:

"There are many incidents connected with the journeys to Persia and Syria undertaken by Omar, the son of Khattab, in pre-Islamic days during the course of which he paid visits to the several Arabian and Persian princes. These incidents I have narrated at full length in my books entitled *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *Kitab al-Ausat.*"

The books to which the learned author makes references here were priceless gems in the treasure of history but the latter-day Islamic peoples have long since lost them altogether. With the view of tracing this portion of Omar's life we searched all the libraries at Constantinople but in vain. We have gone through certain volumes of the History of Damascus written by the famous traditionist Ibn Asakir. He relates some events regarding the travels of Omar but no vein of interest runs through his book.

Thus it was that the laurels won by Omar at Ukaz and the experience gained by him in the course of his trade travels brought him to the notice of the people of Arabia and, as time went on, his ability and skill advanced him more and more in the

good graces of his countrymen till at last the Quraish invested him with the dignified office of their ambassador. On all critical occasions in their dealings with other clans the person selected by the Quraish to bring the matter to a successful diplomatic issue was Omar.



CHAPTER II

CONVERSION TO ISLAM

OMAR was in the twenty-seventh year of his age when the Prophet of God declared his mission, and the echoes of Islam reverberated through Arabia. The " still small voice " of oneness of God had not been altogether unfamiliar to the ears of many a member of the house of Omar owing to Zaid, whose son Saeed was the first to be converted to Islam. Saeed was married to Omar's sister Fatima and his persuasion made her also embrace the new faith. Another respectable member of the same family, Nuaim ibn Abdulla, had likewise adopted Islam. Omar, however, was as yet stranger to the tenets inculcated by the Prophet. When the first notes rang in his ears they sounded harsh and discordant and enraged him so much that he became the enemy of those of the tribe who had confessed Islam. Labina, a slave girl in his house, incurred his wrath by turning Muslim, and he used to beat and beat her till he would stop from sheer exhaustion and then he was wont to exclaim, "Wait till I recoup my breath and then I'll beat thee again ". He did not refrain from belabouring others besides Labina, on whom he could lay his hands. But for those,

however, who had embraced it, Islam had a charm and no force on earth could divest them of the spiritual halo of glory which it cast round them. Omar, therefore, found it impossible to estrange from Islam, even one single person in spite of the hardships he inflicted. As a last resort he definitely made up his mind to do away with the life of the Founder of Islam himself. He buckled his sword and bent his steps in the direction of the Prophet. The wire-pullers behind the scene of the Drama of Fate straightway exclaimed:

Our skill at last has brought
The friend whom long we sought.

On his way he happened to meet Nuaim ibn Abdulla who, noticing the dark frowns on his face, asked him what was the matter. Omar replied that he was going to slay Muhammad. Nuaim rejoined: "You should look to your own house first; both your sister and brother-in-law have accepted Islam." On hearing this Omar instantly turned back to his sister's house. She was reading the Quran, but, hearing him enter, she became silent and put the leaves of the Quran out of sight. He had, however, heard his sister's voice and asked her what it meant. She replied that it was nothing, on which he said: "Don't you attempt to conceal anything from me, I know everything; I have heard that both of you have turned heretics", and saying this he took hold of his brother-in-law and laid severe hands on him.

His sister tried to intervene but he smote her also till her body was streaming with blood. In this plight she exclaimed: "Omar! do as you will, Islam can never get out of our hearts." These words produced a strange effect on his mind. He regarded his sister with an affectionate gaze and, seeing the blood which was pouring out from the wounds he had inflicted, was greatly moved. At last he said: "Put me in the way of what you were reading." Fatima brought the fragmentary parchments of the Quran from where she had hidden them and placed them before him. He took them up and met the Sura "All things that are in the heavens or on the earth sing the praises of God and He is Omnipotent and Omniscient". He read the passage with eager attention and each word seemed to inspire his heart with awe till at last when he came to the verse "Believe in God and in His Prophet", he instinctively cried out: "Verily I believe that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His Prophet."

This incident took place at the time when the Prophet had sought refuge in the house of Arqam, which was situated at the foot of the Safa hills. Omar came up to this house and knocked at the door. As he had come sword in hand, and no one knew of the scene that had just been enacted, the companions of the Prophet felt some anxiety. But Amir Hamza said: "Let him come in, if he comes with a friendly motive so much the better, if not,

his head shall be struck off with his own sword". On Omar's entrance the Prophet himself went a few paces forward and catching hold of his robe asked: "Omar! to what motive shall we ascribe your visit?" The commanding and dignified tones of the Prophet's voice awed him and with the deepest humility he replied: "I come to embrace Islam." This answer elicited from the Prophet an impulsive cry of "*Allah Akbar*" (God is Great) and all his companions followed his example by ejaculating the same formula in a chorus so mighty and grand that the hills of Mecca reverberated far and wide.*

The conversion of Omar marks a new era in the annals of Islam. Hitherto although forty or fifty men had joined its ranks, and the redoubtable warrior of Arabia, Hamza, the prince of Martyrs, had also embraced the Islamic faith, still Musalmans could not openly perform their religious functions, while praying in the Kaaba was quite out of the question. With Omar's adoption of Islam this state of things was suddenly changed. He openly declared his faith and although the idolaters treated him with the utmost rigour at first, still the perseverance with which he maintained the struggle against them at last overcame their vindictive opposition and he was so far successful that accompanied by the small band of Musalmans he

* *Ansab al-Ashraf* of Balazuri; *Tabaqat* of Ibn Saad; *Usd al-Ghaba* and *Kamil* of Ibn Asir.

went to the Kaaba where they said their prayers together. Ibn Hisham describes this event, on the authority of Abdulla ibn Masud, in the following words:

" When Omar embraced Islam, he fought with the Quraish until he had the better of the struggle so far that he entered the Kaaba where he said his prayers and we along with him."

The conversion of Omar to the Islamic faith took place in the 6th year of the Revelation.

CHAPTER III

THE FLIGHT

OMAR'S FLIGHT

THE Prophet's claim to be the Messenger of God was regarded by the Quraish with unqualified disdain for some time. Their feelings, however, were changed into wrath and mortification when they saw that the forces of Islam were marching apace. At last, when a large number of people had thrown in their lot with the propounder of the new faith, the Quraish made up their mind to crush Islam with force so that it could never rise again. They could not openly carry out their resolve while Abu Talib lived, but no sooner had he died than the idolaters stood up as one man and began persecuting the Musalmans with such unrelenting cruelty that, but for the strong and irresistible hold which Islam had over their hearts, not a single individual could have persevered in the Faith. This state of things continued for five or six years and the hardships and privations which the followers of the new Faith had to suffer during this period form a woeful tale.

In the meanwhile a respectable band of the

citizens of Medina had confessed Islam, and the Prophet ordered that such persons as could not defend themselves against the persecutions of the idolaters should flee to Medina. Abu Salma Abdulla ibn Ashhal was the first who availed himself of the Prophet's permission, and Belal the Prophet's *Muazzin* and Ammar Yasir followed suit. After these Omar with twenty men set out for Medina. Of the men who accompanied Omar no names are given in the *Sahih Bukhari*, only the number 20 is mentioned. Ibn Hisham, however, has given the names of some of them which are: Zaid ibn Khattab, Saeed ibn Zaid ibn Khattab, Khunais ibn Huzafa Sahmi, Amr ibn Suraqa, Abdulla ibn Suraqa, Waqid ibn Abdulla Tamimi, Khaula ibn Abi Khaula, Malik ibn Abi Khaula, Ayas ibn Bukair, Aqil ibn Bukair, Amir ibn Bukair and Khalid ibn Bukair. Of these Zaid, Saeed and Khunais were Omar's brother, nephew and son-in-law respectively. The rest were his friends and comrades.

As Medina did not afford sufficient accommodation most of the Muhajirin (the people who took to Flight) stayed at Quba, situated at a distance of two or three miles from Medina. Omar also came here and sojourned in the house of Rafaa ibn Abd al-Munzir. Quba is also named Awali and this is the name of the place which is spoken of in the *Sahih Muslim* as being the abode of Omar after he came away from Mecca. After Omar, most of the companions of the

Prophet escaped to Medina till at last the Prophet himself bade adieu to Mecca in the 13th year of the Revelation (632 A.D.) and the luminary of Prophethood rose on the horizon of Medina.

On his arrival at Medina the Prophet, first of all, made arrangements for the accommodation of the Muhajirin. He sent for the Ansar and established a brotherhood between the fugitives and their protectors. The salutary effects of this policy culminated in an issue the unique utility of which has hardly been surpassed by even the strictest principles of the doctrine of Communism, for each Ansari who accepted a Muhajir as his brother-in-faith promptly shared his property, money and all things equally with the latter. Thus it was that all the Muhajirin and the Ansar became mutual brethren-in-faith. In organizing this fraternity the Prophet paid due regard to the social position and rank of the parties whom he knitted in the spiritual bond, that is to say for each Muhajir of a given social status he selected an Ansari brother-in-faith moving in the same sphere of life. Thus Omar's brother-in-faith was Utban bin Malik, who was the chieftain of the Bani Salim.*

* *Sirat* of Ibn Hisham. The learned Hafiz ibn Hajar on page 321 of the Preface to his book entitled *Fath al-Bari* mentions the name of Aus ibn Khauli instead of Utban. But it is surprising that the learned Hafiz in his other work, entitled the *Asaba*, does give the name of Utban on the authority of Ibn Saad while in speaking of Aus ibn Khauli he fails to make any mention of his being Omar's brother-in-faith.

Most of the companions continued to live in Quba even after the arrival of the Prophet. Omar did the same, but every second day he would regularly go to the Prophet and pass the day in his company. On the intervening days on which he was absent, it was arranged that his brother-in-faith, Utban ibn Malik, should remain in the company of the Prophet and relate to Omar what he heard from the Prophet.

Bukhari has mentioned this event *en passant* in several chapters such as the chapters on Knowledge, Marriage, etc.

Tranquillity being restored on the Prophet's arrival at Medina, it was now high time that the laws and functional tenets of Islam should be systematically formulated. While they were in Mecca the lives of the Muslims were in constant jeopardy and self-protection could, therefore, be the only objective. Hence Fasting, *Zakat, Juma* (Friday) prayers, *Id* prayers, *Sadqa-i-Fitr* had not yet been enforced. The utmost brevity was observed in prayers which, except in the case of the evening prayers, consisted of only two *raka'ts* at all times. Even the method of the call to prayers had not been defined. The Prophet therefore wanted, first of all, to regulate this method. The Jews and Christians used musical instruments for this purpose and the Companions gave their opinion in favour of the same. Ibn Hisham, on the authority of

a tradition, points out that the Prophet himself proposed the use of some musical instrument to serve as a call for prayers. The matter, however, was still under discussion and no decision had yet been arrived at, when Omar appeared on the scene and said : "Why not appoint a man for this purpose". The Prophet sent for Bilal at once and ordered him to make the call for prayers.*

It should be remembered that *Azan* (call for prayers) is the preface to *Namaz* (Prayers) and an important rite of the Islamic religion. It redounds to the glory and pride of Omar that the observance of this greatest injunction was regulated according to the method proposed by him.

* *Sahih Bukhari* : *Kitab al-Azan.*

CHAPTER IV

1 A.H./623 A.D. UP TO THE DEATH OF THE PROPHET: BATTLES & OTHER EVENTS

THE events of the life of Omar, from the year 1 A.H. to the time of the Prophet's death, in reality form a part of the Prophet's biography. The battles fought by the Prophet, the treaties entered into with foreign nations, the administrative schemes promulgated from time to time, the measures adopted for the propagation of Islam—not one of these incidents was accomplished without the active co-operation of Omar. The difficulty, however, is that if all these were to be narrated at full length, this part of our book would be transformed into a 'Life of the Prophet', for, however grand these moments of Omar's zeal and labour may be, we cannot do otherwise than record the events as parts of the life of the Prophet with which they are closely related, while Omar's name, in this connection, would be only mentioned incidentally. We have, therefore, been compelled to adopt the compromising course of relating such events with the utmost brevity and dwelling at greater length on those incidents with which Omar is mainly connected. It is true that, according to this plan, we shall not be able to give our

hero's achievements the prominence which is their due, and shall fail to do them proper justice, but there is no alternative. We now proceed to relate, very briefly, the events which took place during the life-time of the Prophet.

On the Prophet's flight to Medina, the Quraish presumed that the Musalmans were likely to gather strength if they were not summarily extirpated; and, acting upon this presumption, they set about preparing for an attack on Medina. No engagement worthy of mention, however, took place till the second year of the Hijra. Only on two or three occasions the Quraish advanced on Medina with a small force; but the Prophet, on receiving the intelligence, despatched a small number of men who checked their advance there and then.

THE BATTLE OF BADR

IN the year 2 A.H./624 A.D., the famous battle of Badr was fought. The *casus belli* was this. Abu Sufyan, the Chief of the Quraish, was returning from Syria with merchandise. On his way he received (false) information to the effect that the Musalmans wanted to attack him. He communicated the news to the Quraish and forthwith the whole of the Meccans rose to arms. The Prophet, on hearing this news, left Medina with a force of about 300 men. Historians generally state that the Prophet left Medina solely with the view of plundering

the caravan, but this is entirely wrong. The Holy Quran, than which no more convincing evidence can be forthcoming, speaks of this incident in the following terms:

"Just as thy Lord made thee quit thy abode (Medina) to do what was right, and verily a faction of the faithful were averse to the measure. They quarrelled with thee about the truth after it had been brought to light, thinking that they were being driven to their death and they were looking at it. And when God promised you victory over one of the two hosts, while you desired to obtain an advantage over that host which was powerless" (VIII : 5-7).

These verses clearly show that:

1. When the Prophet made up his mind to go out of Medina to meet the enemy, a section of the Musalmans hesitated to accompany him as they feared that they were going to meet their doom.

2. At the time of the Prophet's march from Medina the infidels consisted of two distinct bodies: one being the unarmed host, *viz.*, Abu Sufyan's trading caravan, the other being the Meccan host of the Quraish which, meditating attack, had left Mecca armed *cap-a-pie*. Moreover, Abu Sufyan's caravan consisted of only forty men, while the Prophet had left Medina with a band of 300 warriors. The hypothesis that 300 men could imagine that in fighting 40 odd

adversaries they were facing death is at once untenable. At the same time it is thus evident that if the Prophet's object had been to plunder the caravan, God would not have said in the Quran that the Musalmans thought that to face them would be to face death.

At any rate the Prophet marched from Medina with 313 men on the 8th of Ramazan, 2 A.H. Of these 83 were the Muhajirin and the rest the Ansar. The Quraish forces consisted of 950 fighting men, many of them being the flower of Arab chivalry. The two forces came into collision at Badr, a place nearly six marches from Medina. The struggle was fierce and desperate and in the end the infidels were completely routed. The number of losses on the side of the Muslims was 14 of which 6 were Muhajirin and 8 Ansar. The Quraish casualties were 70 slain and a like number taken prisoners. Among the slain were Abu Jehl, Utba ibn Rabeea, Sheba and many other Meccan chiefs. By their death a severe blow was dealt to the power of the Quraish.

Omar was the right hand of the Prophet throughout this affray ; and the most tangible results which characterize his co-operation may be recounted as follows :

1. All the various clans of the Quraish tribe took part in this battle except Banu Adi—Omar's clan—from which not a single individual threw in his lot with them, and so far as can be

judged, this is to be attributed to the respect and awe which Omar's personality commanded from the people of his clan.

2. Twelve men of Omar's kin and clan joined the battle with him. Their names are: Zaid, Abdulla ibn Suraqa, Amr ibn Suraqa, Waqid ibn Abdulla, Khauli ibn Abi Khauli, Malik ibn Abi Khauli, Amir ibn Rabia, Amir ibn Bukair, Aqil ibn Bukair, Khalid ibn Bukair and Ayas ibn Bukair.

3. The first martyr in the battle was Mahja the slave of Omar.*

4. Asi ibn Hisham ibn Mughira, a respectable Quraish noble and the maternal uncle of Omar, was killed during the battle at the hands of Omar himself.† It has been reckoned as one of the salient traits of Omar's character that, in matters of faith, love of kith and kin could never make him swerve from the stern path of duty and the present instance furnishes the first example of the kind.

The number of enemy taken prisoners in the battle of Badr was approximately 70 most of whom were eminent Quraish nobles, such as Abbas, Aqil (Ali's brother), Abul As ibn Rabi, and Walid ibn al-Walid. The sight of these chieftains, coming in the humble attitude of prisoners, was so touching

* *Ibn Hisham*, p. 490.
† *Ibn Jarir*, p. 509.

that it could not but greatly impress the Musalmans. Sauda, the wife of the Prophet, on seeing them could not suppress the cry, "you come as prisoners: why did you not die (a glorious death) on the battle-field".

OMAR'S OPINION ABOUT THE TREATMENT OF PRISONERS

THE contention now arose what treatment should be meted out to the prisoners. The Prophet asked the opinion of all his companions who voted differently. Abu Bakr pointed out the advisability of releasing them on payment of ransom as they were their own kith and kin. Omar opposed this and observed that kinship had nothing to do with matters affecting the vital interests of Islam. In his opinion all deserved to be beheaded in this fashion that each person from among the Muslims should kill his own kinsman. Thus Ali should sever Aqil's neck, Hamza should strike off Abbas's head while he (Omar) would perform a similar office in regard to one of the prisoners who was of his blood.* The Prophet, however, was more merciful and, approving of the views of Abu Bakr, set the prisoners free after making them pay the ransom money. This was the occasion of the revelation of the following verse (VIII : 67):

* *Tabari*, p. 1355.

"It does not become an apostle that he should have prisoners in custody until he has revelled in slaughter."

Although the victory at Badr broke the power of the Quraish, a new series of troubles faced the Musalmans. The Jews had long held possession of Medina and its suburbs. When the Prophet arrived at Medina, the first step he took in the organization of political affairs was to enter into an offensive and defensive alliance with the Jews. The Prophet's glorious return from Badr, however, made the Jews uneasy for they feared lest the Musalmans should ultimately grow to be their powerful rivals. Accordingly they began to show the Musalmans their true character and exasperate them by making such remarks as: "The Quraish knew not what the art of war meant. Had we been in their place we would have taught you a good lesson." Matters reached such a pitch that the treaty they had entered into with the Prophet was broken by them. The Prophet led an expedition against them in the month of Shawwal, 2 A.H. and they were ultimately taken prisoners and deported from Medina. The continued series of skirmishes which appear in the annals of Islam to have ensued between the Muslims and the Jews originated from this incident.

The defeat sustained by the Quraish at Badr enraged them and they sullenly brooded over thoughts of vengeance. Abu Sufyan had vowed

that he would not take a bath till he had avenged the reverse which their arms had sustained at Badr. In the month of Zil Hijja, 2 A.H. he stole to the neighbourhood of Medina with 200 camel riders and having treacherously inveigled two Musalmans slew them outright.

The Prophet on receiving this news pursued Abu Sufyan but he was already out of reach. Petty forays like this continued to be contested for some time till in the month of Shawwal, 3 A.H./625 A.D. the famous battle of Ohod took place.

THE BATTLE OF OHOD

THE circumstances which led to the battle of Ohod may be thus narrated: Ikrama ibn Abi Jehl and many other Quraish chiefs waited upon Abu Sufyan and represented to him the feasibility of immediate vengeance being wreaked on the head of the victors of Badr if only he undertook the cost of the expedition. Abu Sufyan agreed to the proposal and preparations for an attack were forthwith commenced. The clans of Kinana and Tahama also joined them. Abu Sufyan placed himself at the head of this well-equipped force and marched from Mecca with great pomp. In the month of Shawwal on a Wednesday he halted near Medina. The Prophet urged his people to fortify themselves in Medina and repel the invasion of the Quraish from

there. The Companions, however, would not agree to his plan and at last the Prophet was compelled to march out of Medina on a Friday. The Quraish were 3,000 strong of whom 200 were cavalry and 700 were clad in coats of mail. The commands of the right and left wings were entursted by the enemy to Khalid ibn Walid and Ikrama ibn Abi Jehl respectively. (These two personages had not yet embraced Islam.) On the side of the Musalmans there were only 700 men and of these only 200 were mail-clad warriors. About three miles away from Medina rises a mountain called Ohod. At the foot of this mountain the two armies were drawn up in battle array. The Prophet posted Abdulla ibn Jubair with 50 archers at the rear of the Muslim army to check the onslaught of the enemy from that direction. Fighting commenced on Saturday the 7th of Shawwal. Zubair led the assault and out-manœuvred the right wing of the Quraish. After this the battle became general. Hamza, Ali and Abu Dujana rushed into the middle of the enemy's ranks and such was the irresistible force of their onslaught that they overwhelmed their opponents in all directions and totally demoralized them. But as bad luck would have it the Musalmans on seeing that victory was certain ravenously fell upon the spoils. The archers, too, thinking that the fray was over, left their position and joined in securing the booty. No sooner had they done so than Khalid

made a sudden rush from behind. The Muslims had thrown down their arms to secure the spoils of war and they were not therefore in a position to meet the impetuous charge. They reeled before the onset. The infidels rained a shower of arrows on the Prophet and pelted him with missiles which broke his teeth, inflicted a wound on his forehead and caused the steel links of the visor of his helmet to pierce his cheeks. At this juncture he fell into a pit and was hidden from the sight of his followers. In the confusion which followed a cry arose that the Prophet was killed. The courage and firmness of the Muslims gave way before the alarming news and everyone stood rooted to the spot: a picture of dismay.

Opinion is divided as to the number of the companions who stood by the Prophet up to the last. The *Sahih Muslim* contains a tradition on the authority of Ans that only seven Ansar and two Muhajirin, namely, Saad and Talha, stood the Prophet in good stead in the battle of Ohod. Nisai and Baihaqi have stated on authentic basis that with the exception of eleven Ansar and Talha there was no one near the Prophet. Muhammad ibn Saad mentions the names of fourteen persons in this connection. There are similar other traditions* which differ from each other in some respects. Hafiz Ibn

* Full detail is given in *Fath al-Bari*, p. 272, Vol. VIII, Egyp. Ed.

Hajar in his *Fath al-Bari* has reconciled these traditions thus: "When the Musalmans had scattered away, the infidels suddenly attacked them on the rear and, seized with terror and dismay, the Muslims knew not what to do. Then, as they got opportunity, they rallied round the Prophet."

A review of all the traditions shows that when the news of the Prophet's death got wind, panic seized some of the Musalmans and thinking that it was all over, they fled to Medina never once stopping to look behind, while others continued to fight desperately thinking that it was useless to survive the Prophet. Others, still, despairingly flung their shields aside concluding that it was no use fighting any longer. Omar belonged to the third group. The learned Tabari relates a tradition on the closely transmitted authority of Ibn Humaid, Salma, Muhammad ibn Ishaq and Qasim ibn Abdur Rahman ibn Rafi to the effect that Ans ibn Nazar, seeing Omar, Talha and a few other Muhajirin and Ansar, seated despondingly on the battle-field, asked them what they were doing there. They replied that the Prophet was no more. Ans rejoined: "Do you care to live when the Prophet is dead? Go on fighting like him till you also die." Thus saying he rushed on the serried ranks of the infidels and was presently slain.* Qazi Abu Yusuf has related the following tradition which he ascribes to Omar him-

**Tabari*, p. 1404

self. Ans ibn Nazar passing by Omar asked him how it had fared with the Prophet. Omar replied that he thought that the Prophet was killed. Ans observed in reply that the Prophet's death should not dissuade him from what it was his duty to do as God was still living to watch him, and saying this he unsheathed his sword and fought with the infidels till he was slain.* Ibn Hisham, in his book, says that Ans received seventy wounds in this battle.

It is a noticeable feature of the traditions related by Tabari that the name of Talha is mentioned among the comrades of Omar, and it is an admitted fact that no one showed more unflinching resolution and constancy in the battle of Ohod than Talha. At any rate, all the traditions are unanimous in testifying the fact that, at a time when the wildest confusion and disorder prevailed, Omar did not waver but firmly stayed on the battle-field, and on learning that the Prophet was alive he forthwith went up to him. The following passage is from *Tabari* and the *Sirat* of Ibn Hisham.

" The Musalmans, on seeing the Prophet of God, rallied and went up to him, and, accompanied by them, he ascended the mountain pass. At this time Ali, Abu Bakr, Omar, Talha ibn Obaidulla, Zubair ibn al-Awwam and Haris ibn Sama were

Kitab al-Kharaj, p. 25

with him."

The learned Balazuri is the only historian who speaks of Omar in the *Ansab al-Ashraf* as follows:

"Omar was one of those who fled from the battle-field of Ohod but God pardoned his sin."

Balazuri relates another tradition to the effect that when Omar, in the days of his Caliphate, apportioned allowances to the people, it was pointed out to him in regard to an allowance which he was going to bestow upon a particular individual that his own son Abdulla was more deserving than the individual in question. Omar in reply said that such was far from being the case inasmuch as the father of that individual had remained constant in the battle of Ohod, while Abdulla's father (Omar himself) had not been so.

This tradition, however, is unreliable. Not to speak of its untenability from the ratiocinative point of view—for flying from the battle-field was an ignominous shame the stigma of which no one could openly attach to his name—it can hardly be maintained by the canons of tradition. The traditions on the authority of which the learned Balazuri bases this tradition includes Abbas ibn Abdulla al-Baksai, and Ghaiz ibn Ishaq and it is to be remembered that these two men are notorious for their untrustworthiness. All other traditions discountenance this view of the matter.

Having discussed the grounds of contention so

far, we now come back to the original event.

Khalid, with a body of troops, advanced in the direction of the Prophet who, in the meantime, having recovered consciousness, had betaken himself with thirty companions to the mountain. Seeing Khalid come, the Prophet exclaimed: "O God! Let not these people come here." Omar, with a few Muhajirin and Ansar, dashed forward and turned back the advancing men.*

Abu Sufyan, the generalissimo of the Quraish, approached the pass and cried out: "Is Muhammad in the midst of this group?" The Prophet beckoned his followers not to say anything in reply. Abu Sufyan then asked aloud whether Abu Bakr and Omar were there, and, when he still got no reply, he said: "They must have been killed." Omar could no longer maintain silence and, in a thundering voice, retorted: "We are all of us alive O enemy of God!". Abu Sufyan shouted: "Glory to Hubal." The Prophet commanded Omar to shout out in reply: "Allah is Most High and Glorious!" †

HAFSA'S MARRIAGE

DURING the same year the Prophet did Omar the honour of entering into a matrimonial alliance with his daughter Hafsa. Hafsa was married to Khunais

* Ibn Hisham: *Sirat*, p. 576 and *Tabari*, p. 1411.
† *Ibid*, p. 582 and 1417.

ibn Hozafa in the pre-Islamic days. After the death of Khunais, Omar desired Abu Bakr to marry her. Abu Bakr, however, did not say anything in reply. Thereupon Omar made the same offer to Osman but he also returned no answer. The reason why Abu Bakr and Osman kept silent was that both of them had become aware that the Prophet himself intended to wed Hafsa. Accordingly in the month of Shaaban, 3 A.H. the Prophet married Hafsa.

THE BANU NAZIR AFFAIR

THE event of Banu Nazir took place in the year 4 A.H./626 A.D. We have already observed that the Prophet had concluded peace with the several Jewish clans inhabiting Medina. Of these the Banu Qainuqa violated their side of the treaty and were expelled from Medina. Banu Nazir was the name of the other Jewish clan which still resided in Medina. They were also bitter enemies of Islam. In the year 4 A.H. the Prophet, accompanied by Omar and Abu Bakr, went to implore their aid in a certain matter. They instigated a man named Amr ibn Jehash to get upon the roof of a house and hurl a boulder on the Prophet's head. The man had already ascended the roof when the Prophet, happily, got wind of the plot. He got up and left the place forthwith, and sent word to them to leave the city. They refused to do so and began

to prepare for a struggle. The Prophet overcame them in a skirmish that ensued and deported them from Medina. Some of them repaired to Syria while others went and established themselves at Khaibar where they ultimately set up a state of their own.* Of the Jews, who settled at Khaibar, Salam ibn Abil-Haqiq, Kinana ibn Rabi and Huayy ibn Akhtab were powerful and influential nobles. When Khaibar afforded them a safe haven and tranquillity came in its wake, thoughts of vengeance against the Prophet came into their mind. Accordingly they went to Mecca and incited the Quraish, once more, to try conclusions with their common enemy. Along with it they visited all the tribes of Arabia with the object of fomenting a general rising and succeeded in setting the whole country ablaze. In a few days ten thousand men gathered beneath the banner of the Quraish, and in Shawwal, 5 A.H. the great host, under the command of Abu Sufyan, marched towards Medina.

BATTLE OF KHANDAQ (DITCH) 5 A.H./627 A.D.

THE Prophet came out of Medina and caused an entrenchment to be excavated on the further side of the Salaa, a mountain near Medina. Trenches had not hitherto been employed in Arabian warfare and

* *Tabari*, p. 1452.

the infidels knew not what to do against it. As a last resort they besieged the trench surrounding the camp and posted their troops on all sides to blockade the Musalmans. The siege continued for one month. Now and then a body of infidels would cross the ditch at all hazards and attack the besieged. The Prophet, therefore, posted some of the most distinguished of his companions here and there on the near side of the ditch to keep off the enemy from crossing it. One of these posts was assigned to Omar and the spot is still marked by a mosque bearing his name. One day the infidels tried to carry the entrenchment by storm, but Omar, reinforced by Zubair, was anticipating the enemy in crossing the trench and with a terrible onslaught broke their serried ranks.* On another occasion his contest with the infidels was so prolonged that the time for the Asr prayer was well-nigh passed. After making the enemy beat a retreat he came to the Prophet and told him how the infidels had kept him so hotly engaged that he could not even say his prayer. The Prophet replied that he himself had not till then said his Asr prayer.

Amr ibn Abdud, the famous champion of Arabia, who was held to be a match for five hundred horsemen, was slain in this battle at the hands of Ali. His death greatly damped the ardour of the

---

* Shah Wali-Allah has mentioned this incident in his book *Izalat al-Khifa*, but I have not seen the same corroborated in any other book.

Quraish, and Naim ibn Masud who, unknown to the infidels, had embraced Islam, gave the *coup de grace* to their irresolution by sowing the seeds of discord and creating a rupture between the Jewish and Quraish alliance. To be brief the sable clouds of idolatry which had thickened ominously athwart the horizon of Medina gradually rolled away and after a few days not a vestige of the black portent was to be seen.

THE HUDAIBIYA

IN the year 6 A.H./628 A.D. the Prophet, with his companions, intended to undertake a pilgrimage to the Kaaba. In order, however, that the Quraish should not suspect them of warlike intentions he ordered that no one should carry arms. On arriving at Zul-Hulaifa, which is situated at a distance of six miles from Medina, the thought occurred to Omar that it was not advisable to travel in such a manner. He, therefore, waited upon the Prophet and presented his views. The Prophet acquiesced in and sent for arms from Medina. When the pilgrims came within two stages of Mecca, Bashar ibn Sufyan arrived with the news that the Quraish had made a resolve not to allow the Muslims to enter Mecca. The Prophet wanted to send someone of his distinguished Companions as an envoy to the Quraish to tell them that the

Musalmans did not come with the object of fighting. He accordingly desired Omar to undertake the embassy. Omar submitted that the Quraish were his bitterest enemies and that none of his kinsmen were at Mecca to support him. He then pointed out that Osman had his friends and relations at Mecca and that it would, therefore, be advisable to depute him. The Prophet approved of this counsel and despatched Osman to Mecca. The Quraish obstructed Osman's return and when some days went by it was rumoured that he had been slain. The Prophet, on receiving this intelligence, made his companions, 1,400 in number, to take a vow of allegiance to him by which they bound themselves to a *Jihad* against the infidels. As the vow was taken under a tree the incident is known as *the Bait al-Shajarah* (the vow under the tree). It is to this very incident that the Quran refers in the following verse :

"Verily Allah was pleased with the faithful when they swored allegiance to thee under the tree" (XLVIII : 18).

Hence the incident is also termed *the Bait al-Rizwan* (the vow that pleased God).

Omar had commenced his preparations for the impending fight even before the vow of allegiance to the Prophet was taken. It is mentioned in the *Sahih al-Bukhari* in connection with the skirmish of the Hudaibiya that Omar sent his son to a particular

Ansari to ask the loan of his horse. Abdulla, on going out, saw that people were being initiated into the vow of allegiance to the Prophet. He also went up to the spot and took the vow. When he returned to his father, whom he saw in the act of donning his arms and accoutrements, he told him the incident of the initiation into the vow. Omar directly went up to the Prophet and swore the vow of allegiance along with the rest.

The Quraish insisted upon their refusal to admit the Prophet to Mecca. After protracted altercations a treaty was signed, according to which the Musalmans were to retrace their steps that year and return the next year when they would be permitted to sojourn in Mecca but not for more than three days. The treaty contained another clause by which a ten years' truce was agreed upon during which period any one of the Quraish who seceded from his people and went to the Prophet, was to be handed over to the Quraish but if any one of the Musalmans happened to fall into the hands of the Quraish they were at liberty to keep him. The concluding part of this treaty was apparently of very great advantage to the infidel host. Omar was ill at ease about it. The treaty had not yet been signed when he came up to Abu Bakr and protested against its unfavourableness to the Musalman interests. Abu Bakr explained to him that whatever was done by the Prophet was

undoubtedly discreet. This argument, however, was not sufficiently plausible to convince Omar. He went up to the Prophet and thus opened his mind to him:

"O Prophet of God! Are you not the Messenger of God?"

"Certainly I am," said the Prophet.

"Are not our enemies idolatrous polytheists?"

"Undoubtedly they are," rejoined the Prophet.

"Why then should we disgrace our Religion?"

"I am the Messenger of God and I do not act in contravention of His Commandments."

Although the above conversation of Omar, especially its tone, was disrespectful which subsequently, however, distressed him greatly and to expiate which he did penance by keeping fasts, saying prayers, giving alms and liberating slaves,* still it shows that the point at issue which determined the dialogue was based upon the leading question: 'What acts of the Prophet relate to his capacity as a human being and what acts to his functions as a Prophet.' We propose to fully discuss this point in the second part of this book.

In short, the treaty of peace was committed to writing and was signed by the most distinguished Companions of the Prophet, and Omar was included among them. The Prophet then wended his way

* *Tabari*, p. 1546.

back to Medina. On the way, the *Sura Fâteh* (the chapter of Victory) was revealed. The Prophet called for Omar and told him that God had that day revealed to him verses which he loved best of all things in the world. Saying this he read out the following verses: *

"Verily We opened wide for thee the gates of victory. . . ." (XLVIII : 1).

According to the traditionists the Musalmans and infidels up to this time lived separately. By the convention of Hudaibiya they were brought into close social relations and their constant intermingling contributed towards the rapid and uninterrupted propagation of the tenets and ideas of Islam. This culminated, within a couple of years, in the conversion to the rising Faith of such a large number of people as exceeded those who had embraced Islam during the previous 18 years.† This was then the motive which had led the Prophet to make peace and which Omar could not at first understand, and it was on this very account that, in the *Sura Fâteh*, God denoted this peace by the word 'Victory.'

OMAR DIVORCES HIS WIVES

HITHERTO it was permissible to marry infidel women but on the revelation of the verse "and do

* *Sahih Bukhari*, on Hudaibiya.
† *Fath al-Bari*, p. 340, Vol. VII. Egyp. Ed.

not make alliances with idolatrous women" the permission became null and void. Omar accordingly divorced both his wives who were idolatresses. One of them was named Qariba and the other Umm Kalsum bint Jarool. After divorcing both of them Omar married Jamila, the daughter of Sabit ibn Abil-Afla. Omar's son Asim was begotten of this lady.

During the same year the Prophet made epistolatory communications with the several emperors and kings inviting them to Islam.

THE BATTLE OF KHAIBAR

THE famous battle of Khaibar took place in the year 7 A.H. We have already spoken of how the Jews of Banu Nazir clan, who were expelled from Medina, went and settled at Khaibar. It was at the instigation of Salam and Kinana and others of their chiefs that the Quraish were led to bring an expedition against Medina in 5 A.H. How their plot failed is well-known, but the thought of revenge still rankled in their breasts, and they never ceased from thinking of wreaking it. They eventually succeeded in enlisting the sympathy of the Banu Saad clan to their cause, and the latter expressed their willingness in the year 6 A.H. to side with them. On receiving this report the Prophet sent Ali against them. The Banu Saad

beat a precipitous retreat and left a booty of 500 camels with the Musalmans. After this the restless Jews prevailed upon the Ghatfan clan to fight the Musalmans. When the Prophet advanced on Khaibar the first opposition he encountered was from this clan. In the circumstances it was imperative to crush the power of the Jews once and for all, for, otherwise, they would have been a constant source of annoyance to the Musalmans.

To be brief, in the year 7 A.H., the Prophet marched on Khaibar with a force of 1,400 infantry and 200 cavalry. The Jews had fortified Khaibar with a number of strong forts and towers such as Naim, Qumus, Saab, Watih and Salalam. All these forts fell in rapid succession except Watih and Salalam which were guarded by Marhab, a redoubtable warrior of Arabia. The Prophet entrusted the command of the invading army to Abu Bakr but he came back unsuccessful. Omar was next chosen as Commander and he fought for two successive days but in vain. On seeing this the Prophet said that, on the morrow, he would hand over the banner to the person who was to storm the proud forts. Next day all the distinguished Companions came to the Prophet armed *cap-a-pie* in magnificent array, each buoyed up with the hope that he was to be the favoured recipient of the Prophet's banner. Omar was one of the number and he was wont to say that never in his life did he covet the office of

banner-bearer and of command more than on this occasion. It was destined, however, that the brow of Ali should be graced with the proud laurels of this distinction. The Prophet did not take notice of anybody but calling upon Ali bestowed the banner upon him. Marhab was killed at the hands of Ali and with his death ended the battle of Khaibar.

The lands of Khaibar were divided by the Prophet among the fighting men. One piece, known by the name of Samagh, fell to Omar's share. Omar set it apart for charitable purposes. The *Sahih Muslim* contains a full reference to this incident in the "Bab al-Waqf" (Chapter on Endowments). This was the first endowment made in the History of Islam.

In the same year the Prophet sent Omar, at the head of 30 men, against the Hawazin clan. No fighting, however, took place as, on hearing the news of Omar's advance, they took to flight.

THE FALL OF MECCA

MECCA fell in the year 8 A.H./630 A.D. It came about in the following manner :

One of the terms of the peace of Hudaibiya ordained that the clans of Arabia were at liberty to side with the Quraish or the Musalmans according to their discretion. Accordingly the Khuzaa clan espoused the cause of the Prophet while the clan of Banu Bakr sided with the Quraish. These two clans

had long been antagonistically disposed towards each other and many a fray had been contested between them. They were still fighting when the treaty of Hudaibiya was signed and both the clans had to withdraw according to the terms of the treaty. A few days afterwards, however, the Banu Bakr broke the peace and the Quraish abetted them. The Khuzaa were now hard pressed and when even on taking refuge within the sacred precincts of the inviolable sanctuary of the Haram, they did not find themselves free from molestation, they resolved to appeal to the Prophet. Abu Sufyan, on hearing this, anticipated them and reached Medina in advance. He went up to the Prophet and on behalf of the Quraish requested the renewal of peace. The Prophet made no reply to this overture. Abu Sufyan then went to Abu Bakr and afterwards to Omar whom he prayed to intervene and have the matters settled. Omar cut his request short in such a stern manner that he was completely disconcerted.

The Prophet launched preparations for the march on Mecca, and in the month of Ramazan, 8 A.H. he mobilized a force of ten thousand men from Medina. A halt was made at Marraz-Zahran and Abbas, bestriding the Prophet's mule, started towards Mecca on a diplomatic mission. On the way he met Abu Sufyan whom he accosted with the remark: "Let me take you to the Prophet and sue and obtain peace for you, or your fate is sealed to-day." Abu

Sufyan was consoled at the idea and making the best of the opportunity hastened to follow Abbas. They had not gone far when they came face to face with Omar. Seeing Abu Sufyan in Abbas's company Omar conjectured that the latter was going to plead to the Prophet in his favour. Indignant at the idea he strode rapidly forward and going to the Prophet said: "Permit me to behead this enemy of Islam who has after a long time fallen into our hands." Abbas, who had by then arrived at the spot retorted: "Omar you would not have been so eager to spill Abu Sufyan's blood if he were one of your clan and not a member of the house of Abd Manaf." Omar replied: "By Allah I would not have rejoiced half so much if my father Khattab had embraced Islam, as I rejoiced when you confessed the blessed faith." The Prophet yielded assent to the recommendation of Abbas and granted his life to Abu Sufyan.

The Prophet entered Mecca with great pomp and splendour and, standing at the gates of the Kaaba, delivered a highly eloquent oration which is reproduced word for word by Muslim historians. Then, accompanied by Omar, he ascended the brow of the Safa to initiate the people into the vow of allegiance to him. The people came in large bands and took the oath of allegiance. Omar sat next to the Prophet but at a lower level. After the ceremony was over in so far as men were concerned, the turn of the women came; but, as the Prophet

was not wont to touch the hands of women who were not related to him, he ordered Omar to initiate them on his behalf. So all the women took the vow of spiritual allegiance to the Prophet at the hands of Omar.

THE BATTLE OF HUNAIN

THE battle of Hawazin, better known as the battle of Hunain,* took place during the same year. The Hawazin were a famous and respectable clan of Arabia. These people had watched the progress of Islam with jealous eyes from the very beginning. When the Prophet moved out of Medina with a view to conquering Mecca they thought that the Musalmans intended to attack them, and forthwith they prepared to give battle to the latter. On hearing of the arrival of the Prophet at Mecca they advanced in considerable force on Mecca and encamped at Hunain.† The Prophet, on learning this, marched out of Mecca with a force of twelve thousand. At Hunain the two forces were arrayed in battle order against each other. In the first onset the Musalmans routed the enemy.‡ But while the victors were occupied in securing the plunder of the

* Hunain is the name of a valley behind the Arafat hills and is situated at a distance of about 10 miles from Mecca.

† *Tabari.*

‡ *Sahih Muslim*: Battle of Hunain.

field the Hawazin made a tremendous rush and rained in such volleys of arrows that the Musalmans were thrown into disorder and out of an army of twelve thousand men very few remained on the battle-field, the rest having taken to flight. The names of the companions who showed proper spirit in this engagement have been particularly mentioned, and, of course, include the name of Omar. The learned Tabari has clearly alluded to it. Muhammad ibn Ishaq, who is one of the foremost traditionists upon whom the Imam Bukhari has copiously drawn and whose reputation as a chronicler of battles and biographies is unchallenged, writes thus in his book entitled *Kitab al-Maghazi*: "And with the Prophet only a few men from the Muhajirin and Ansar and his relations remained, such as Abu Bakr, Ali, Omar and Abbas." *

The battle, however, resulted in a victory for the Musalmans for they rallied and returned to the charge and ultimately won the day, six thousand Hawazins being taken prisoners.

In the year 9 A.H./631 A.D. the rumour gained currency that the Roman Emperor was preparing to invade Arabia. The Prophet accordingly directed the Companions to rise to the occasion and as the period was one of scarcity and want, he induced the

* I have not seen the original work of Ibn Ishaq, but I have seen a very old Persian translation of it and the extract is taken from the same. This translation was made in 612 A.H. by the order of Saad ibn Zangi, and the Allahabad Public Library possesses a very old manuscript of it.

people to help the expedition with money and effects. Most of the Companions offered large sums of money and Omar laid before the Prophet one-half of his property.* In short, everything in the shape of arms and provisions was ready and the Prophet set out from Medina. On reaching Tabuk, however, it was ascertained that the rumour was unfounded. After staying there for a few days, therefore, the Prophet returned to Medina.

The same year is marked by the Prophet's annoyance with and separation from his wives and as from his attitude it appeared that he had divorced all of them, all the Companions were greatly grieved. None dared, however, to say anything to the Prophet on the subject. Omar wanted to see the Prophet but could not get admission into his presence although he repeatedly prayed for the same. At last Omar cried aloud to the porter: "Perhaps the Prophet thinks that I have come to plead for Hafsa (Omar's daughter and the Prophet's wife). But by Allah no! if the Prophet were to order me to do so, I would go and behead Hafsa with my own hands".† The Prophet heard this and immediately called him in. "Have you divorced your wives?" asked Omar as he entered the presence of the Prophet.

* This incident is mentioned in *Tirmizi* and *Abu Daood* under the heading "the virtues of Abu Bakr" but no reference is made to any particular battle in this connection.

† *Sahih Muslim*, chapter on Divorce.

"No," replied the Prophet.

"Then with your permission I shall announce this joyful news to the Musalmans who are sitting in the Mosque with heavy hearts," rejoined Omar.

This event shows how intimate Omar was with the Prophet and on one occasion Umm Salma (one of the Prophet's wives) told Omar, when the domestic scene above alluded to was yet being enacted, that his interference in all matters had attained such a climax as not to keep him back even from meddling with affairs which he should have done well to let alone between the Prophet and his wives.

During the year 10 A.H./632 A.D. a large number of deputations arrived from all parts of Arabia and men entered the pale of Islam by thousands and hundreds of thousands. In the same year the Prophet went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and this was the last pilgrimage undertaken by him.

In the month of Safar, 11 A.H./632 A.D., the Prophet appointed Usama ibn Zaid to advance at the head of a force against the Romans and commanded all the distinguished Companions to accompany him. Everything was ready for the march when, at the end of the month, the Prophet fell ill and the expedition was postponed.

According to a famous tradition the Prophet's illness lasted thirteen days. Baihaqi, on positive authority, says that the period was ten days, and Sulaiman Yatimi, in his *Maghazi*, has given the same

duration. The illness was remittent. At one time the fever came on with violence and at another abated so far that the Prophet would go to the Mosque and say his prayers. Even in the morning of the day on which he died, he felt so well that he walked up to the door and drawing aside the curtain looked at the people at prayer which sight greatly pleased him and a smile of satisfaction wreathed his face.

THE EVENT OF QIRTAS

THE most important incident which marks the Prophet's illness is that of Qirtas (the paper). Three days before his death the Prophet sent for pen and ink and said that he was going to write directions for his people which would save them from falling into error. On this Omar addressed the people, telling them that the Prophet was in an agony of pain and that the Quran was a sufficient guide for them. Some of the men said that the Prophet was raving (Heaven preserve us from the blasphemy!). The word '*Hajir*' occurs in the tradition which signifies hysteria.

The above incident is apparently amazing. It places the critic in a position to observe that nothing can be more audacious and rebellious than the careless and defiant attitude of Omar in declaring that they did not want the Prophet's instructions and that the Quran was a sufficient guide for them; and

that too at a time when the Prophet lying on his death-bed is impelled by infinite solicitude for his people to say: "Let me write for you directions which will save you from falling into error;" and when it is evident that these directions, intended to be written with a view to saving the people from going astray, would emanate from him in his capacity of Prophet and would thus be inspired and infallible. Some of the traditions even go to the length of affirming that it was Omar himself who pronounced the word of the Prophet to be ravings (Heaven preserve us from the blasphemy).

This objection has for a long time been maintained and the two rival factions of Islam have put such interpretations upon the question as have best suited their interests. As, however, this controversy gave rise to many irrelevant discussions, and the principles of ratiocination were never brought to bear on the subject, the main question remained undecided while a number of unimportant points were raised. Thus it was contended that it is possible for a prophet to rave, for raving is one of the maladies to which human flesh is prone and the Prophet was not exempt from human maladies.

The main point which requires consideration in this connection is whether it is possible to draw any positive and unimpeachable inference from an event narrated in the traditions in a particular form. The following facts should not be lost sight of in

discussing this question:

1. The illness of the Prophet lasted for thirteen days or so.

2. As fully described in the *Bukhari* and *Muslim* the paper and pen were sent for on Thursday and, as the Prophet died on Monday, it is evident that he lived for four days after that incident.

3. No tradition mentions any other case in which the Prophet showed signs of mental aberration during his illness.

4. A large number of the Companions were present at the time but, although the large numerical strength of the witnesses of the event forms the subject of different versions (the *Sahih Bukhari* alone describing it in seven different ways), it is significant that, with the exception of Abdulla ibn Abbas, no other Companion has transmitted any tradition with regard to the event.

5. Abdulla ibn Abbas was only thirteen or fourteen years old at the time.

6. Abdulla ibn Abbas was not a direct witness of the event as he was absent at the time of its alleged occurrence, and the source from which he derived his information regarding the same is unknown.*

7. All the traditions are unanimous in maintaining that when the Prophet asked for paper

---

* The tradition mentioned in the chapter on *Kitab al-Ilm* in the

and pen the people said that the Prophet was raving.*

It is noticeable first of all that when tradition is silent upon any other incident or symptom of mental aberration displayed by the Prophet, his merely asking for pen and ink could hardly have led the people to think that he was not in his right senses. Suppose that apostles are liable to delirium. But this does not imply that even their ordinary talk should be twisted and warped into the ravings of a madman. We cannot understand that there is anything incoherent in a prophet's saying on his death-bed, "Fetch me pen and ink that I may write for you directions which will save you from going astray in future." † Even accepting this tradition as true, the presumption still remains that the narrator omitted the narration of those incidents

Bukhari shows *prima facie* that Abdulla ibn Abbas was present on the occasion. The traditionists have therefore criticised it and demonstrated that he was not present at the alleged occurrence of the event. (See *Fath al-Bari*, chapter *Kitab al-Ilm.*)

* The learned Qartabi puts the following interpretation on the words and he is proud of it: "The people used the word as a mark of admiration and denial as if to say that the Prophet's orders should be obeyed, and not be disregarded, for surely he was not raving." This explanation is happily apposite but the distinct wording of several traditions in *Bukhari* and *Muslim* precludes the possibility of such a solution: thus in *Muslim* the word "raves" occurs twice together and its redundancy serves only to emphasize the view adopted by the propagators of the tradition, or at another place the clearly defined expression "the Prophet *is* raving," occurs which does not admit of any other meaning.

† The mode of reasoning employed in substantiating the allegation is curious. It is contended that as the Prophet did not know how to write, his remark, "I may write," was incoherent. But perhaps they are not aware that (in the Arabic language) 'to write' also implies 'to dictate,' and this meaning is commonly used.

which impressed the people with the idea that the Prophet was not in his senses and was asking for pen and ink in a state of delirium. How can it be possible to draw any positive inference from a tradition about an event, the principal features of which were omitted by the narrator. At the same time, when it is remembered that, in an event of such momentous importance, the only narrator is Abdulla ibn Abbas, a lad merely thirteen or fourteen years, and even he was not an eye-witness of the event, the trustworthiness of the tradition becomes seriously questionable. It is just possible that it may be too much for a person of shallow understanding to conceive that the authenticity of a tradition in the *Bukhari* and *Muslim* has been suspected, but he should remember that it is easier to suspect any narrator of inaccuracy, from whom *Bukhari* and *Muslim* have drawn their materials, than to cast the slur of mental aberration upon the Prophet and of audacity on Omar.

In short, the Prophet lived for four days after this occurrence, and made several behests and gave many instructions in the interval. On the very day of his death his vital energies had so far rallied that the people thought that he had quite recovered, and Abu Bakr, thinking the same, returned to his house which was situated at a distance of two miles from Medina.* Omar, however, was near the Prophet up

* *Tabari*, pages 13 and 18.

to his last moment. The Prophet died on Monday, the 12th Rabi al-Awwal, 11 A.H., at noon in the house of Aiysha and was buried just after noon of the following day. Who can gauge the extent of the grief caused to the Musalmans by his death. The common tradition is that Omar was so upset that he went up to the Prophet's mosque and exclaimed aloud: "Whosoever will say that the Prophet is dead I shall slay him." Other considerations do not, however, substantiate this tradition. Our opinion is that Omar may have deemed it politic to suppress the news as there was a large number of hypocrites in Medina who were only waiting for the Prophet's death to foment trouble. This very incident has assumed different shapes in different narrations. The difficulty, however, is that the *Sahih Bukhari* and other books contain references which cannot tally with our conjecture.

CHAPTER V

THE SAQIFA BANI SAADA
CALIPHATE OF ABU BAKR AND OMAR'S EFFORTS TO SECURE IT

IT is apparently surprising that no sooner had the Prophet died than the struggle for the Caliphate commenced and even the burial of the body of the Founder of Islam became a matter of secondary consideration in the quarrels that arose over the question as to who should succeed him. Who can for a moment conceive the spectacle of the Prophet lying dead, while those who asserted their love and attachment towards him in his life-time, without even waiting to look to his remains being suitably interred, were hurrying away to see that others did not secure the headship of the state for themselves.

It is still more surprising that this act is attributed to the persons (Abu Bakr and Omar) who are the brightest stars of the Islamic firmament and the unpleasantness of the act becomes still more poignant when it is remembered that those persons who were connected with the Prophet by ties of blood and kinsmanship (Ali and the Banu Hashim family) were naturally affected by his death

and the sad bereavement prostrated them with grief which, coupled with their anxiety to perform the last offices to the dead, hardly left them room for ulterior considerations.

We admit that works on Tradition and Biography seemingly impress one's mind with the same notion, but such is not the case if facts are inquired into. It is true that Omar (and Abu Bakr) went off to the Saqifa Bani Saada leaving the Prophet's dead body unburied; it is also true that on arriving at the Saqifa Omar disputed over the Caliphate with the Ansar and continued in his efforts to overthrow their cause in a manner as if no calamity had befallen him; and it is also true that they (Omar and Abu Bakr) forced not only the Ansar but Ali and Banu Hashim as well to acknowledge the election of Abu Bakr as Caliph,—though the latter did not do so readily. But there are certain important points which should not be lost sight of in this connection. These points are:—

1. Whether the question of the Caliphate was raised by Omar and his companions.

2. Whether these personages went to the Saqifa Bani Saada of their own accord.

3. Whether Ali and Banu Hashim were not anxious to secure the Caliphate for themselves?

4. Whether or not the action taken by Omar and Abu Bakr was justifiable under the circumstances?

With regard to the first two points we give the following extract from the *Musnad* Abu Yaala,* a work of unquestionable authority, which will throw full light on the subject:

"It is related by Omar that as they were seated in the Prophet's house a man all of a sudden cried out from outside: 'O son of Khattab (Omar) pray step out for a moment.' Omar told him to leave them alone and go away as they were busy in making arrangements for the burial of the Prophet. The man replied that an incident had occurred, *i.e.*, the Ansar were gathering in force in the Saqifa Bani Saada and, as the situation was grave, it was necessary that he (Omar) should go and look into the matter lest the Ansar should do something which would occasion war. On this Omar said to Abu Bakr, 'Let us go'."

From this it will appear that neither did Omar and Abu Bakr anticipate others in raising the question of succession, nor did they want to repair to the Saqifa Bani Saada of their own accord.

With regard to the third point it may be observed that the Musalmans could be ranked in three separate groups at that time:

(1) Banu Hashim, counting Ali amongst them (2) the Muhajirin, who were headed by Abu Bakr and Omar, and (3) the Ansar whose chief was Obada. Of these three groups none was indifferent

* *Fath al-Bari*, Vol. VII, p. 23.

to the prospects of the Caliphate. The Ansar had made an open avowal of their intentions and the following tradition will show what Banu Hashim's ambitions were.

On the day of the Prophet's death, as Ali came out of the house, the people gathered round him to make enquiries about the health of the Prophet. As the Prophet had seemingly rallied and looked quite well, Ali told them that by the grace of God he had recovered. Abbas caught hold of his hand convulsively and cried out: " By Allah! you will be a slave after three days. I can foresee that the Prophet will shortly die of this disease, for I know from experience that when any member of the house of Abd al-Muttalib is going to die the expression of his face undergoes a peculiar change. Let us go to the Prophet and ascertain from him who is to be the successor in the office of Caliphate after he is no more. If we are the rightful successors, the Prophet will make a will in our favour." Ali replied that he would not ask the question, for if the Prophet happened to say nay, all future hopes would be cut off.*

This tradition clearly shows the views of Abbas. Ali was not sure of the Prophet's death up to that time, and he therefore did not deem it expedient to take any step in the matter; besides he was not

---

* *Sahih Bukhari*, chapter on the illness of the Prophet; also *Fath al-Bari*

confident of his nomination.

After the Prophet's death, a meeting was held at the house of Fatima (the Prophet's daughter and Ali's wife) in which all the Banu Hashim and their allies were present.

This party was headed by Ali. The *Sahih Bukhari** contains the following tradition of which the narrator is Omar :

"This is what befell us. When the Prophet breathed his last, the Ansar seceded into a separate faction and, gathering in the Saqifa Bani Saada, opposed us, while Ali, Zubair and their followers also made a stand against us. Then it was that the Muhajirin gathered around Abu Bakr."

The above speech was made by Omar at a large representative gathering when hundreds of the Companions were present. It cannot therefore be presumed that he stated anything which was against facts, for, if he had misstated the case the audience would have instantly interrupted him. The tradition narrated by Imam Malik further clears up this incident. The following is the version of this tradition: †

"And Ali, Zubair and their followers seceded from us and gathered at the house of Fatima the daughter of the Prophet."

Tabari's *History* says: ‡

---

* *Kitab al-Hudood*, chapter entitled *Rajm al-Jabali*.

† *Fath al-Bari*.

‡ P. 1820

" Ali and Zubair seceded, and the latter, drawing his sword from the scabbard, exclaimed that he would not sheath it unless allegiance was sworn to Ali."

All these traditions clearly point to the conclusion that: (1) Immediately on the death of the Prophet three rival factions, the Ansar, the Muhajirin and the Banu Hashim, sprang up on the issue of the Caliphate. (2) The Muhajirin and Banu Hashim followed the lead of Abu Bakr and Ali, respectively. (3) Just as Omar and Abu Bakr, etc., had gone off to the Saqifa leaving the Prophet's dead body unattended, Ali had similarly left the Prophet's side to attend a gathering of the Banu Hashim at Fatima's house.

The reason why Ali did not go to the Saqifa was not because he was prostrated with grief at the loss of the Prophet or because he was too disconsolate to think of the Caliphate but because the Muhajirin and the Ansar were gathered at the Saqifa and none of them would have backed up Ali's claim, for Abu Bakr was the acknowledged head of the Muhajirin while Saad ibn Obada was the chief of the Ansar.

The final contention is whether all that took place was expedient or not. This can be readily grasped by every individual acquainted with the rudiments of the laws of social evolution. At the time of the Prophet's death Medina was full of

sanctimonious hypocrites who were only waiting for the passing away of the Founder of Islam to deal destruction to the Faith. One can imagine whether at such a critical juncture it was expedient to pass the time in lamentations or to take immediate steps for the nomination of a caliph and the restoration of everything from chaos to settled order. The Ansar, by opening the question of the Caliphate, rendered the situation still more critical, for the Quraish could not bow down their head before the Ansar whom they regarded with supreme disdain. The unqualified contempt in which the former held the latter may be gathered from the fact that when the Ansar warriors challenged the Quraish adversaries on the battle-field of Badr, Utba, addressing the Prophet, said: "O Muhammad! we cannot fight with those who are not our peers." To say nothing of the Quraish, the whole of Arabia would have refused to acknowledge the supremacy of the Ansar. Abu Bakr, in a speech made at the Saqifa, clearly gave expression to this view and said: "The people of Arabia will not acquiesce in this as long as the Quraish live." Moreover, the Ansar themselves were divided into two factions: Aus and Khazraj. In the circumstances it was essential that the claim of the Ansar to the Caliphate should be suppressed and a fit and competent person at once elected. Of all those present Abu Bakr was the oldest, and the most influential and he

would have been readily elected, but the attention of people was drawn towards the tumult raised by the Ansar. The *casus belli* had assumed such a threatening aspect that swords were about to fly from their scabbards. Apprehending that the storm was ready to burst Omar took time by the forelock and at once placed his hand in that of Abu Bakr declaring that the first to pay the homage of allegiance was himself. Osman, Abu Obaida al-Jarrah and Abdur Rahman ibn Auf followed suit,* and the populace then pressed forward with one accord to proclaim their allegiance to Abu Bakr. A rising storm was thus warded off and the people being satisfied took to the pursuits of normal life. The only dissenting section of the people were the Banu Hashim who still insisted upon their claims and occasionally gathered at Fatima's house plotting to achieve their own ends. Omar tried to force them to pay homage to the First Caliph, but the Banu Hashim could not bow down before any other person except Ali. The learned Tabari in his *Tarikh Kabir* has narrated a tradition to the effect that Omar standing at the door of Fatima's house, exclaimed: "O daughter of the Prophet! I swear by God that we love you best of all, but if your house continues any longer to be a rendezvous for conspiring men in this manner I will set fire to it on

*Ibn al-Mawardi in his *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya* writes that only five persons paid their homage in the first instance.

account of these men."

The authority of this tradition is doubtful as we have not been able to glean particulars regarding its narrators, but there is no reason to deny the occurrence of this incident in the light of ratiocination. Omar was a man of hot and irascible temper and such an act would not have been inconsistent with his nature. The fact is that certain measures were rashly and over energetically taken by Omar at this critical juncture, and although they may be wanting in moderation, still it should be remembered that it was owing to this very fact that sedition was nipped in the bud. If the machinations of the Banu Hashim had continued, the foundations of the Islamic brotherhood would have there and then been shaken and the same civil wars would have started which were waged between Ali and Amir Muawiya later on.

The Caliphate of Abu Bakr lasted for two years and three months as he died in the month of Jumada II, 13 A.H. All the important measures adopted during this interval had of course Omar's hand in them. They cannot, however, be treated appropriately in this book as, after all, they appertain to the time of Abu Bakr and might well be dwelt upon by the person on whom devolves the honour of writing Abu Bakr's biography.

Although from long experience Abu Bakr was confirmed in the belief that none but Omar could

take the heavy responsibilities of the Caliphate, still, with a view to gauging public opinion, he consulted the *elite* of the Companions when his last hour approached. First of all he called for Abdur Rahman ibn Auf and asked his opinion. He replied that the fitness of Omar was acknowledged by all, but he was rather harsh of temper. Abu Bakr rejoined that the harshness of Omar was meant to counteract his own (Abu Bakr's) leniency, and that he would spontaneously soften when everything rested with him. After this Abu Bakr sent for Osman and invited an expression of his views on the question. Osman replied that he could only say this much that Omar's inner self was better than his exterior, and that no one was his equal among them. When the rumour got afloat that Abu Bakr had a mind to nominate Omar as a caliph the prospect caused certain persons much anxiety. For instance, Talha went to Abu Bakr and expressed his fears thus: "You are alive to the severity with which Omar treats us in your life-time, heaven knows what treatment he will mete out to us when the Caliphate devolves on himself. You are now about to leave us for ever and are going to make over our destinies to a person who will rule us with an iron-hand. Bethink you what answer will you give to God for this?" Abu Bakr replied that he would say unto God that he appointed that person to rule over His servants who was the best of them

all. Saying this he sent for Osman and began to dictate the testament of the Caliphate. He had communicated the preamble when he fell into a swoon. Seeing this Osman added the following words himself: "I appoint Omar as Caliph." After a while, when Abu Bakr came to himself, he asked Osman to read out what he had written. As Osman read the document, Abu Bakr cried out "Allah Akbar" (God is great) impulsively and said: "May Heaven requite you!" When the testament was completed, Abu Bakr gave it to his slave bidding him to read the same before the general public. Then he ascended the balcony and thus addressed the people who were gathered below: "I have appointed no one from amongst my own kith and kin as Caliph, but Omar. Does this arrangement suit you?" The people with one voice replied: "We listen and we obey." After this he sent for Omar and charged him with many an impressive and valuable counsel which should serve Omar as good rules of conduct throughout his career.

CHAPTER VI

THE CALIPHATE AND CONQUESTS

DURING the Caliphate of Abu Bakr the apostates of Arabia and the false claimants to the Prophethood having been weeded out of the land, the era of political conquests had already commenced. In the second year of his Caliphate, that is, in the year 12 A.H., an army was sent against Iraq and all the districts of Hira were conquered. In 13 A.H./634 A.D., Syria was invaded and Muslim forces overran the whole territory. These expeditions were yet in their early stages when Abu Bakr died. Omar now assumed the reins of the Caliphate and it was essential for him, in the first place, to bring these expeditions to a successful termination. Before, however, describing these events at length we deem it necessary to point out the relations which existed between Arabia on the one hand and Persia and Syria on the other, prior to the advent of Islam.

Nothing is known of the Arab Baida, one of the oldest tribes of Arabia. Tradition, however, tells us that the Ad and the Amalaqa (two of its clans) made themselves the masters of Iraq. The

Arab Ariba, who ruled over Yemen, had at one time become very powerful, so much so that they held Iraq under their sway on several occasions and claimed to hold their own against the Persian Empire.

The Arabs gradually began to settle in the Persian dominions. Bakht Nasr, the king of Babylon, whose name is coupled with an unenviable notoriety because of his having destroyed the holy city of Jerusalem, invaded Arabia and subjugated many a clan who left their native homes and settled in the districts of Iraq. A large number of the descendants of Maad ibn Adnan established themselves later on in this territory until their consolidated strength culminated in laying the foundations of a kingdom. As anarchy was raging in the Persian Empire at this period, the Arabs succeeded in setting up a regular kingdom of which the first ruler was Malik ibn Fahm Adnani. Among the rulers of this dynasty the empire of Jazimat al-Abrash extended far and wide. His nephew Amr ibn Adi, who succeeded him on the throne, established his capital at Hira and was called the king of Iraq. Culture had in this epoch made so much progress that Hisham Kalbi states that he derived a considerable portion of his materials, with regard to the accounts of Arabia and the relations subsisting between Persia and Arabia, from the books which were written at Hira in that period. About this time Ardsher ibn Babak annihilated the

forces of anarchy in Persia and, establishing an extensive empire, made Amr ibn Adi a tributary to the Persian throne. Iraq was ruled by the descendants of Amr ibn Adi for a long time afterwards, but strictly speaking it was a Persian satrapy.

During the reign of Shapur ibn Ardsher, the second emperor of the Sasanian dynasty, Hijaz and Yemen became both tributary to Persia, and Imra al-Qais Kindi was appointed satrap of these provinces. It was, however, against the nature of the Arabs to remain subject to an alien without demur. Whenever, therefore, an opportunity occurred the standard of rebellion was raised. Thus, on the accession of the infant Shapur Zul-Aktaf to the throne of Persia, the whole of Arabia broke out in open revolt and the Abd al-Qais tribe were so bold as to invade Persia itself, while the Ayad usurped the provinces of Iraq. Shapur, on growing to manhood, gave evidence of an indomitable will and indefatigable energy and made up his mind to wreak a terrible vengeance on the heads of the Arab rebels. He marched on Hajar where he caused great bloodshed. Then, putting the tribe of Abd al-Qais to the sword, he marched as far as Medina. The shoulder blades of the Arab nobles, who were brought as prisoners before him, were dislocated by his orders. Hence he is remembered in the annals of Arabia by the title of Zul-Aktaf which means 'he of the shoulders.'

Of the kings of Hira, Numan ibn Munzir who was the contemporary of Kisra Parwez, embraced Christianity. For this reason, or for some other which has not transpired, Parwez imprisoned him and he died while in prison. Numan had entrusted his arms and accoutrements to Hani, the chief of the tribe of Bakr. Parwez demanded these from him and, on his refusal, despatched Hurmozan with two thousand troops to enforce surrender of the required effects. All the clans of the Bakr tribe gathered with great show at a place called Zi-Qar. A sanguinary battle took place in which the Persians were defeated. The Holy Prophet of Islam was present in this battle and when the tide of the battle turned against the enemy he exclaimed : " It is the first day that Arabia has avenged herself on Persia." All the poets of Arabia took great pride and displayed much fervour and animation in celebrating this event in odes and poems.

In the year 6 A.H. the Prophet wrote letters to several neighbouring kings, inviting them to accept the Islamic faith. Although these epistles were couched in peaceful terms and did not even allude to an appeal to arms or compulsion, still on reading the letter addressed to Parwez he cried out : " Being my slave he dares to write to me thus ! " He then issued an order to Bazan, the governor of Yemen, to the effect that he should send someone to arrest and bring Muhammad to the Imperial Court. It so

happened, however, that Parwez was about this time murdered by his son and his threat remained unexecuted.

The relations of Arabia with the Roman Empire may be thus summed up:

Certain Arab clans, such as Salih, Ghassan, Jazam and others, had settled in the border districts of Syria. These people gradually seized several districts in the interior of Syria and their chiefs, on gathering greater strength and influence, began to style themselves as kings of Syria. The title, however, was *soi-disant* and one to which they had helped themselves, for, as the historian Ibn al-Asir has pointed out, they were in reality no more than viceroys of Rome.

Long before the advent of Islam, these people had embraced Christianity and, being co-religionists, a strong fellow-feeling had sprung up between them and the Romans. When the propagation of Islam commenced they too, like the idolaters of Arabia, proved themselves the enemies of the new Faith. In the year 6 A.H. the Prophet wrote a letter to the Emperor of Rome, inviting him to accept the Islamic faith. Dihya Kalbi, the emissary, on his way back, stopped at Arz Jazam when these Syrian Arabs attacked Dihya and plundered all his effects and equipage. Similarly, when the Prophet despatched Haris ibn Omair with a letter addressed to the ruler of Busra, Haris was put to death at the instance of

Omar ibn Shur-Habil. To avenge this wrong the Prophet, in the year 8 A.H., marched with a force and the battle of Muta was fought. Zaid ibn Harisa Jaafar Tayyar, and Abdulla ibn Rawaha, who were distinguished among the Companions, were slain in this battle, and although the strategy of Khalid extricated the troops from the danger of annihilation, still the issue of the battle was in reality a defeat for the Musalmans.

In the year 9 A.H. the Romans prepared to invade Medina, the very heart of Arabia itself. The Prophet, however, anticipated them and marched out with a force to intercept their advance. When he arrived at Tabuk, the enemy, losing heart, failed to venture further. The struggle was thus put off for a time; but the Romans and the Ghassanis continually meditated inflicting some injury upon the Musalmans who were afraid lest they should suddenly steal a march and invade Medina. It is mentioned in the *Sahih Bukhari* that when the rumour gained currency that the Prophet had divorced his wives, a person went to Omar and asked him whether he had heard anything. Omar replied: "Why, no; are the Ghassanis marching on us?" It would thus appear that the fear of a sudden invasion by the enemies above alluded to constantly preyed upon the Musalmans and it was to set himself easy upon the score that, in the year 11 A.H., the Prophet sent an expedition against Syria with Usama ibn Zaid at its

head, and as the operations were intended against a mighty empire whose sources were inexhaustible, Abu Bakr, Omar, and other distinguished Companions were deputed to accompany the expedition. Usama had not yet begun the march, when the Prophet fell sick and died shortly afterwards. In short, at the time of Abu Bakr's accession to the Caliphate, Arabia had already become "the cynosure of neighbouring eyes" and the two adjoining empires considered her an excellent target to practise upon. When Abu Bakr sent an army against Syria he addressed the troops thus: " Whosoever from amongst you will be killed will rank as a martyr, while he who survives will be honoured as defender of the Faith, *i.e.*, he will have defended the Faith from the attack of the enemies." From these circumstances may be inferred the causes of the work which was undertaken by Abu Bakr and afterwards completed by Omar. After making these prefatory remarks we come to the main point.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONQUEST OF IRAQ *

THE fourth period of the Persian empire, which is called the Sasanian period, is marked by the towering personality of Nousherwan the Just. During the time of the Prophet the throne of Persia was occupied by Parwez, the grandson of the same Nousherwan. Up to the time of this proud monarch the empire remained very strong and powerful, but no sooner had he died than decay set in and disorder became so rife that the pillars of the govern-

* Geographers have divided Iraq into two parts. The strip of territory adjoining Arabia is called *Iraq-Arab*, while that adjoining Ajam or Persia is known as *Iraq-Ajam*. *Iraq-Arab* is bounded on the north by Jazira, on the south by the Persian Gulf, on the east by Khozistan, and on the west by Diar-Bakr, of which the chief city is Musal. The capital of *Iraq-Arab* is Baghdad and among its important cities are Busra, Kufa, Wasit, etc.

* * * * * *

Musalman historians, in describing events, are generally in the habit of heading those events with the years in which they occurred. This system, however, is defective inasmuch as it admits of frequent breaks in the chain of narration. Thus while describing the conquests of Persia they find that the year under which they commenced the narration of those conquests is drawing to a close and all the events which transpired in that year must needs be cooped up by them within that interval. Therefore, before the narrative of the conquests of Persia ends or admits of a proper break, they take to recounting the events connected with Egypt and Syria which took place in the same year.

Accordingly with a view to remedying this defect I have described all the conquests of Persia in one place, those of Syria in another and of Egypt in still another place.

ment were shaken to their very foundations and tottered for a long time. Shiruya, his son, reigned only for eight months and had all his brothers, about fifteen in number, put to death. His son Ardsher succeeded him at the age of seven but after a year and a half a dignitary of the court assassinated him and usurped the throne in the year 12 A.H. A few days afterwards he was murdered in his turn by the officers of the court who set Jawansher on the throne; but he died a year after he was installed. No male heir now being left in the dynasty with the exception of Yezdgird, who was still in his infancy. Puran Dukht was made queen of Persia on the understanding that she would have to vacate the throne on Yezdgird's attaining majority.*

The vicissitudes to which royalty was subjected after the death of Parwez caused widespread insecurity in the country. During the time of Puran the rumour was propagated that no lawful claimant to the throne of Persia was living and that the crown was nominally placed on the head of a woman. This news spread like wild fire and two chieftains of the Wail clan in Iraq—Musanna Shaibani and Suwaid Ajli, gathering each of them a small force, began to carry on depredations on the Hira and Uballa side

*The opinion of historians is divided as to the names of the several monarchs and the order in which they succeeded Shiruya. Each gives a separate account and Firdawsi's narrative differs from that of all the others. We have preferred the account of Abu Hanifa Dinawari to others, on account of his being an old annalist and of Persian descent.

of the Iraq frontier.* It was the time of Abu Bakr's Caliphate when Khalid, the Sword of God, had done with his expeditions against the Yamama and other Arab clans. Musanna waited on Abu Bakr and obtained permission from him to invade Iraq. Although Musanna had personally embraced Islam, still all his clansmen were either Christians or idolaters. Returning from the presence of Abu Bakr, Musanna persuaded his clan to confess the Islamic faith and his exhortations succeeded so well that the clan one and all adopted Islam.† Accompanied by a large band of these proselytes Musanna marched towards Iraq, and Abu Bakr immediately afterwards sent Khalid to reinforce him. All the frontier towns of Iraq, one by one, fell before the prowess of Khalid and the cohorts of his victory waved proudly over the battlements of Hira. Hira is situated at a distance of three miles from Kufa, and was at that time memorable on account of the Khornaq, a famous palace erected by Noman ibn Munzir.

These conquests of Iraq form part of the memorable deeds wrought by Khalid, but this is not a fitting place to recount them. Khalid would have completed the conquests of Iraq, but an ominous cloud was thickening on the Syrian horizon and as Musalmans were not fully prepared to try conclusions with the Christians of Syria, who had made

* Dinawari: *Akhbar al-Tiwal.*

† Balazuri: *Futuh al-Buldan*, p. 241

war preparations on an unusually large scale, Abu Bakr issued an order in the month of Rabi II,* 13 A.H./634 A.D. directing Khalid to proceed at once to Syria and make over charge to Musanna. Khalid, accordingly, marched towards Syria and the conquests of Iraq were all of a sudden interrupted.

When Omar became Caliph he devoted his attention first of all to Iraq. Numerous people had come from all parts of the country to pay homage to the new Caliph and continued pouring in for three successive days. Omar rose to the occasion and taking time by the forelock preached *Jihad* to a general assembly. But the people generally believed that as Iraq was the seat of the Persian Government, it could not be conquered without Khalid and therefore they were reticent. Omar addressed the people thus for several days but they did not respond to his exhortations. At last, on the fourth day, he made a thrilling speech with such vehemence that the hearts of the audience were stirred. Musanna Shaibani stood up and said: "Ye Musalmans listen to me! I have tested the courage of the fire worshippers and discovered that they are not at home on the battle-field. We have already conquered most of the important districts of Iraq and the Persians have lowered before our superior prowess." Abu Obaida Saqafi, the famous chieftain

* *Futuh al-Buldan* of Balazuri, p. 250.

of the clan of Saqif, was present on the occasion. In an ardour of enthusiasm he rose from his seat and exclaimed: "I undertake the task." The fervour of the intrepid Abu Obaida had its sympathetic effect on the minds of the audience and the cries of "we also are ready to share in it," rose on every side. Omar picked out a thousand men* from Medina and its suburbs and entrusted their command to Abu Obaida.

Abu Obaida was not a companion of the Prophet and therefore some persons demurred to his being appointed as the chief in command. One man was so bold as to freely make the remark, "Omar! you should select someone from among the Companions for this post; there are hundreds of Companions in the army and it is meet that their generalissimo should be a Companion himself." Omar looked at the Companions and said: "The precedence claimed by you was based on your courage and tenacity of purpose, but you lost this precedence by your own fault; it cannot be that persons who show no relish for fighting should be appointed officers. As, however, it was expedient that he should win the hearts of the Companions he insisted on Abu Obaida to show them every respect and consult them in every undertaking.

The invasion of Iraq during the time of Abu

* This is Balazuri's computation. Abu Hanifa Dinawari has stated the number at five thousand.

Bakr had alarmed the Persians. Puran Dukht sent for Rustam, son of Farrukh Zad, the governor of Khurasan, who was a brave warrior and an astute diplomat, and appointing him minister of war told him that his powers were unlimited and that he was at liberty to do what he liked. Thus saying she placed the crown upon his head and enjoined upon the courtiers, who consisted of the entire nobility and the high officials of the state, to obey Rustam in everything. The Persians had witnessed the evil results of their discord and had learnt a better lesson from their domestic dissensions. They accordingly obeyed these orders sincerely and the result was that disorder and maladministration vanished within a short time and the Empire regained the strength and splendour which characterized it in the times of Hurmuz and Parwez.

The foremost stratagem to which Rustam had recourse was that he despatched heralds and criers to all the parts of Iraq, who succeeded in fomenting an insurrection among the people against the Musalmans by appealing to their sense of religious honour. All the districts lying in the valley of the Euphrates were thus ablaze with the flames of revolt before the arrival of Abu Obaida, while such places as were already under the Musalmans passed away from their sphere of influence. Puran Dukht equipped another large army for the reinforcement of Rustam and entrusted its command to Narsi and Japan.

The latter was a famous noble of Iraq and had particular cause of hatred towards Arabia. Narsi was Kisra's cousin and certain districts of Iraq belonged to him as patrimony from olden times. These two generals advanced towards Iraq by different routes. Abu Obaida and Musanna on the other side had reached as far as Hira and when they heard of the enemy's strength and activity they deemed it expedient to march back to Khafan. Japan in the meanwhile reached Namaraq where he pitched his camp.

Abu Obaida in the interval arranged his troops and with much alacrity advanced to attack. At Namaraq the two armies were arranged in battle order. The right and left wings of Japan's army were headed respectively by two famous captains, Jaushan Shah and Mardan Shah, who fought with much valour and tenacity, but had at last to give way and were captured while the battle still raged at its hottest.* Mardan Shah was unfortunately slain at the spot but Japan who was also a prisoner saved himself by a stratagem. The man who had captured him did not recognize him and taking advantage of this he entreated his captor to release him pleading that he was an old man who could be of no use to him and that he was ready to purchase his liberty in return for two youthful slaves. The

* Japan and Mardan Shah were actually captured and not Jaushan Shah.—Translator.

man agreed to the proposal and set him free. Immediately afterwards, however, other men recognized him and raised a hue and cry saying that they had no mind to set such a bitter foe at liberty ; but Abu Obaida cut them short observing that breaking a promise was unlawful in Islam.

After this event Abu Obaida marched on Kaskar where Narsi was encamped with his forces. At Saqatia the two armies met. Narsi had a very large number of troops with him and Banduya and Taruya, both cousins of Kisra, were commanding the right and the left wings, respectively. Narsi was, however, deferring action as further reinforcements had commenced their march from the capital. Abu Obaida had also been apprised of this by his spies and he, therefore, advanced and attacked the enemy. The battle which followed was a severely contested affair and Narsi was totally defeated. Abu Obaida halted at Saqatia and despatched small bodies of troops in all directions to oust the Persians from their retreats.

Farrukh and Farawandad, the chiefs of Barosma and Zawabi, both declared their allegiance. As a proof of their friendly spirit one day they sent rich viands to Abu Obaida. Abu Obaida enquired whether the victuals were intended for all the troops or for him alone. Farrukh said that he could not make arrangements in such a hurry for victualling the whole army. Abu Obaida, thereupon, refused to

partake of the repast with the remark that the idea of precedence involved an invidious distinction which was unknown to the Musalmans.

On being apprised of the reverse above referred to Rustam placed an army of four thousand men under the command of Mardan Shah, who bore an implacable and deep-seated hatred to the Arabs, and upon whom Nousherwan had bestowed the title of Bahman in recognition of his piety and sanctity. Mardan Shah marched with great splendour and pomp so that the Banner of Kawab which had been preserved as a relic of the dynasty of Kai for many thousand years, and was regarded as the harbinger of victory and conquest, streamed over his head throughout the march. At Mirwa, a place on the eastern bank of the Euphrates, the contending hosts met. As the Musalman forces were encamped on the other bank of the river, Bahman sent word to their general that either he should cross the river himself or let him (Bahman) cross it. All the captains of Abu Obaida unanimously declared that they would feign stop where they were. However Abu Obaida, whom temerity had made reckless, considered such a step as unmanly and told his captains that he could not brook the idea of allowing the fire-worshippers to outstrip the Musalmans in the race of valour. Mardan Shah, who had come as an emissary, took the hint and, with wily diplomacy, put in the remark that it was the general impression in his army that

the Saracens were not brave warriors. These words added fuel to the fire and Abu Obaida forthwith ordered his troops to get ready for an attack. Musanna, Sulait and other prominent officers were entirely opposed to run the risk of crossing the river. In social status and private capacity they (Musanna and Sulait) were the superiors of Abu Obaida. When the latter insisted upon carrying out his plan, they observed that although they were positively certain that the entire force would be annihilated by taking such a step still he was the officer-in-command for the time being and it was not their wont to disobey their superior officer. In short, a bridge of boats was prepared, the entire force crossed the river and faced the enemy. The ground on this side of the river was narrow and uneven and the Musalmans could not, therefore, array their troops in the proper order of battle.

The Persian army presented a formidable spectacle. A large number of huge elephants from whose sides hung clanging bells, moved like so many black mountains. The horses were clad in steel armour and their riders, who wore long caps made of sable fur, had the appearance of wild animals. To the Arab horses such a terrible view was unfamiliar and they, therefore, shied and bolted. Abu Obaida saw that nothing could be done against the elephants. He jumped off his horse and shouted out to his followers: "Brave sons of Arabia en-

close the elephants in your midst and overturn the Houdas* along with the riders!" All jumped down from their horses at this order and severing the cords which fastened the Houdas hurled the warriors who sat on the elephants, to the dust. But this did not mend matters. On whichever side the elephants went they left a long line of crushed and mangled Muslims behind. Abu Obaida, on seeing this, rushed on the white elephant, which headed them, and dealt him a tremendous blow on the trunk severing it from the forehead. The infuriated beast hurled him to the ground and placing his huge foot on his chest crushed him to pulp.

On the death of Abu Obaida, Hakam, his brother, took the standard in his hand and attacked the elephant. The beast crushed his new adversary also under his feet in the same manner as he had the former. After this seven men, who were all related to Abu Obaida and belonged to the clan of Saqif, took the standard in their hands one after the other and were killed. At last Musanna took the standard but the tide of battle had, by this time, turned against the Musalmans who took to flight in a disorderly manner. To crown this, someone ran to the bridge and broke the planks in order to cut off all means of escape; but the rout was so complete that on finding that they could not cross the river by means of the bridge, the fugitives plunged into the stream.

* Houda is an open seat on an elephant.

Musanna caused the bridge to be erected a second time and despatched a column of cavalry to assist the fugitives in reaching the other side of the river. He then barred the advance of the enemy with such scanty troops as were still left and fought with such courage and tenacity that the tide of the Persians, who were pressing the Musalmans hard, was stemmed. Still, when the number of casualties was reckoned, it was found that out of an army of nine thousand only three thousand were left alive.

In the annals of Islam flight from the field of battle has been a rare phenomenon and whenever such a catastrophe has occurred, it has invariably produced a lamentable effect. Those who had the misfortune to bear the stigma in this battle wandered listlessly in remote places for a long time and were too ashamed to go home. They frequently wept disconsolately and could not face their own people. When the news of the terrible reverse reached Medina, mourning filled every house. People lamented the misfortune which had befallen the Musalmans and wept with sorrow. Omar visited those of the fugitives who had reached Medina and who did not come out of their houses for very shame, and he offered them the consolation that they came within the pale of those who retreated "to meet reinforcements" (Quran, VIII : 16), but this did not console them.

According to Balazuri this event took place on a Saturday in the month of Ramazan, 13 A.H. Of

the distinguished companions slain in this battle were: Sulait, Abu Zaid Ansari, Uqba and Abdulla sons of Qabti ibn Qais, Yazid ibn Qais Ansari, Abu Umiat al-Farazi and others.



CHAPTER VIII

THE BATTLE OF BOWAIB (RAMAZAN, 14 A.H.)

THE defeat mentioned in the preceding chapter exasperated Omar and with all the fire of his energy he commenced preparations for a fresh attack on the enemy. He dispatched heralds and emissaries to all parts of Arabia who by powerful and eloquent speeches made the country reverberate with the echoes of fervour and enthusiasm. Tribes began to pour in from all sides of Arabia. Makhnaf ibn Salim, the chieftain of the Azd clan, arrived with seven hundred horsemen. Hasin ibn Mabid came with a thousand men of the Banu Tamim. Adi, the son of Hatam Tai, arrived with a large number of followers. Similarly, the tribes of Rabab, Banu Kinana, Qasam, Banu Hanzala and Banu Zabba were represented by large contingents under their respective chieftains. The enthusiasm was so wide-spread that the chiefs of Namr and Taghlab, who were Christians, came to Omar and said that as the impending contest was one between Arabia and Persia they were with the nation in that national contest. Both these chiefs

were followed by thousands of their tribesmen who were all full of enthusiasm against Persia.

At this time Jarir Bajli happened to be present in the Caliph's court. Jarir was a celebrated noble and had waited upon the Prophet with the request that he might be appointed the head of his tribe. The Prophet had granted his request which, however, remained unexecuted. When he came to Omar, the latter issued orders to all the district officers of Arabia directing them to cause the men of his tribe, wherever they were found, to flock to his (Jarir's) standard on a fixed date. These orders were forthwith carried out and Jarir arrived at Medina a second time, at the head of a large and powerful band of warriors.

In the meantime Musanna had sent his pursuivants to all the frontier districts of Iraq, who, by dint of eloquent addresses and powerful exhortations, had prevailed upon a large number of people to join the army of Musanna. The Persian spies communicated these tidings to the Imperial Court and Puran Dukht at once ordered that twelve thousand horsemen should be selected from the Royal Dragoons and placed under the command of Mehran ibn Mahruya Hamdani. The reason for Mehran's nomination to the command was that he was brought up in Arabia and could, therefore, realize the power and strength of the Arabs and appreciate the magnitude of the task before him. The Muslim forces encamped at

Bowaib, a place near Kufa. Mehran, marching from the capital, advanced straight upon Bowaib and pitched his camp on the other side of the Euphrates, the Muslim army being on the opposite bank. At dawn he crossed the river and arranged his forces in battle order with display of much splendour and pomp. Musanna arranged his army in a very good order. He made several divisions of his army and entrusted each to the command of renowned generals. The right wing of the cavalry was placed under Mazur and the left under Nusair. The command of the infantry was given to Masud, that of the volunteers to Asim, while Asma was placed at the head of the scout guard.

When the dispositions were complete Musanna rode from one end to the other and halting at each standard said: "Brave soldiers beware, lest on account of you, the stigma of dishonour should attach itself to the whole of Arabia!"

According to the Islamic mode of warfare the commander cried *Allah Akbar* (God is great) three times before the attack was commenced. At the first cry the troops were ready with their arms and weapons, at the second they balanced them and at the third made the assault. Musanna had not yet iterated the second cry when the Persians commenced the assault. On seeing this the Musalmans could not restrain themselves and some of them goaded by their enthusiasm broke the line and rushed forward to

meet the enemy. This breach of discipline enraged Musanna, who caught hold of his beard between his teeth and exclaimed aloud: "For the sake of God do not cast a slur on the reputation of Islam." These words produced an instantaneous effect. Men who had gone forward turned right about and reoccupied their respective positions. Repeating *Allah Akbar* for the third time Musanna led the assault.

The Persians dashed forward roaring like thunder so that the battle-field rang with their shouts. Musanna shouted out to his men at the pitch of his voice not to pay any heed to the noise of their adversaries as it was nothing but the hubbub of cowards. He then called the Christian chieftains who accompanied the force and told them to stick fast to him as he was going to make a rush on Mehran, giving them at the same time to understand that although they were Christians still they were Arabs and the event of the hour was a conflict between the Arab and the Persian and as such involved a national cause. They expressed their entire willingness. Musanna placed them on his right and left and made a sudden dash forward. Such was the overwhelming impetuosity of this onslaught that he rent asunder the serried ranks of Mehran's right flank and penetrated the very centre of the enemy. The Persians reeled before this terrible onset, but presumably rallied and fought so desperately that the Musalmans began to show signs of irresolution. At this juncture Musanna

thundered forth: "O Musalmans wither are you going? I am here." Hearing the voice all turned back.* Musanna gathered them and commenced a fresh attack. Just at this moment Masud, the brother of Musanna and a famous warrior, received a wound and fell down. The men under his command were about to lose heart when Musanna shouted out again, "O Musalmans never mind if my brother is killed; valiants always die like that. See that the standards do not lower down." Even while falling to the dust Masud himself cried, "Let not my death make you lose heart."

The foray which followed was a severely contested affair. Ans ibn Hilal, one of the Christian chieftains, who was fighting heroically, fell wounded to the ground. Musanna dismounted from his horse and taking him up in his arms laid him alongside his brother Masud. Many a Musalman officer of note was killed, but the iron will and perseverance of Musanna turned the scale of war in favour of the Musalmans. The centre of the Persian army braved the tide of attack manfully but was entirely annihilated. Shahrbraz, a celebrated Persian officer, was killed by Qurt. Notwithstanding all this, Mehran, the commander-in-chief, was resolute and was fighting sword in hand with great courage and intrepidity, when a youthful warrior of the Taghlab tribe slew him with his sword. As Mehran fell from the steed

* *Al-Akhbar al-Tiwal* of Dinawari.

which he bestrode, the young man sprang on it and proudly exclaimed:

"I am a youth of the Taghlab tribe
And slayer of the Persian chief."

The conflict was brought to an abrupt close by the death of Mehran. The Persians fled in wild disorder. Musanna at once made a dash for the bridge and barred their way. Historians state that no battle had ever left so many corpses for its sanguinary souvenirs, as were strewn on the battle-field on this occasion. A long time afterwards, when travellers passed that way, they witnessed the grim spectacle of heaps of bones scattered everywhere about the place. One of the marked effects of this victory was a decided improvement in the *morale* of the Arabs. The awe with which the Imperialism of Persia had all along inspired them was rooted out of their minds, and the conviction dawned upon them that the last days of the empire of Kisra had arrived. Musanna himself said that he had many a time fought against Persia prior to the advent of Islam when a hundred Persians were more than a match for one thousand Arabs, but now one Arab sufficed to worst ten Persians.

After this battle the Musalmans overran the whole of Iraq.

At the period of which we are speaking a grand fair used to be held at the place which forms the present site of the city of Baghdad. Musanna made

an attack on the day of the Fair. The shopkeepers and their customers fled to save their lives and the invaders secured a rich booty in the shape of cash and property. When this news reached the capital all unanimously exclaimed: "What other result could a woman's rule and mutual discord and disunion produce?" Puran Dukht was immediately deposed and Yezdgird a youth of sixteen,* who was the sole surviving male scion of the house of Kisra, was installed on the throne. Rustam and Feroz were the pillars of the state, but a violent friction raged between them. The courtiers plainly gave them to understand that if they did not give up their private discord and work unitedly in the interests of the empire they (the courtiers) would make short work of them. In short, the coronation of Yezdgird infused a new life into the empire. The Court and military officers took to their work with redoubled activity. All the forts and military outposts were fortified and strengthened. The conquered districts of Iraq emboldened at the prospects of receiving support from Persia, broke into revolt and passed away from the Muslim sphere of influence.

When this intelligence was brought to Omar, he issued prompt orders to Musanna to the effect that he should gather all the troops and fall back towards the frontiers of Arabia and summon the tribes of Rabia and Mazr that were scattered throughout Iraq

* According to Abu Hanifa Dinawari. Tabari gives twenty-one.

to mobilise on a given date.

At the same time he commenced preparations for war on a grand scale. Heralds and persuivants were sent in all directions summoning warriors, chiefs, diplomats, poets, orators and politicians from every part of Arabia to the Caliph's court. As the season for the pilgrimage had arrived Omar set off to Mecca, and he had not yet gone through the ceremonies of the Hajj, when the Arab tribes poured in from all sides. Saad ibn Waqas contributed 3,000 men, each of whom was the master of a separate standard and sword. The chiefs of Hazramaut, Sadaf, Mazhaj, Qais and Ilan came with thousands of followers. The famous tribes of Yemen, Banu Tamim and Banu Asad contributed one thousand, four thousand and three thousand men, respectively.

On returning from the pilgrimage, Omar found the suburbs of Medina teeming with swarms of warriors. As far as the eye could reach nothing but a vast forest of human beings was discernible. Omar orderd that the troops should be mustered and equipped in the best order and intimated his intention to command the whole force in person. He, accordingly, entrusted the divisional command of the vanguard to Talha and that of the right wing to Zubair, while Abdur Rahman ibn Auf was appointed to the command of the left wing of the army. When the army was drawn up he made over charge of the Caliphate to Ali and leaving Medina advanced

towards Iraq. The activity thus displayed by Omar created wide-spread enthusiasm and everyone girded up his loins to meet death in the face. At Sarar, a spring three miles from Medina, the first halt was ordered. As, for certain reasons, it was not expedient that the *Amir al-Mominin* (Chief of the Faithful) should go personally to the battle-field, Omar convened a general Council of War at Sarar and invited the opinion of every one present. All unanimously exclaimed that the expedition could not terminate successfully unless it was headed by the *Amir al-Mominin* himself. The elite of the Companions, however, who could weigh the pros and cons of the affair, gave a contrary opinion. Abdur Rahman ibn Auf said: "War has two issues. Supposing we are defeated and some harm befalls you, then Islam will be no more." Omar got up and made a stirring speech and wound it up by addressing the people thus: "I had a mind to follow your counsel, but the elite of the Companions do not acquiesce in this view." In short, it was unanimously resolved that Omar should not lead the expedition in person. The difficulty, however, still remained that nobody could be found who was equal to this Herculean task. Abu Obaida and Khalid were busy with the expeditions in Syria. Ali was requested to accept the chief command but he refused. The people, in an uncertain frame of mind, were still arguing this question when Abdur Rahman ibn Auf suddenly

stood up and said: "I have found out the man."

"Who is it?" asked Omar.

"Saad ibn Abi Waqas," rejoined Abdur Rahman.

Saad was an eminent Companion and was also the Prophet's maternal uncle. His valour and prowess were moreover admitted on all sides, but Omar was not certain whether his skill as a general and his knowledge of tactics and strategy were sufficient to warrant his nomination as the generalissimo. Omar, therefore, still hesitated; but when all present seconded Abdur Rahman ibn Auf, he was forced to give way. As a precautionary measure, however, he reserved to himself the right of directing the conduct of the expedition. Occasional orders were accordingly issued by him with regard to the mobilization of the troops, the manœuvres to be followed in making attacks, the battle array, the partition of the army into separate divisions and other similar questions from the commencement of the war to its end. Not a single affair could be settled without his express instructions, so much so that even the places at which the army was to halt from time to time between Medina and Iraq were nominated beforehand by Omar himself. The historian Tabari has given a detailed list of these places.

In short, Saad unfurled and raised the standard of the army and set forth from Medina. After

making seventeen or eighteen marches he arrived at Saalaba* where he encamped. From Saalaba to Kufa there are three stages. A monthly fair was held at Saalaba as it had plenty of water and enjoyed a pleasant site. Saad stopped here for three months. Musanna was awaiting the arrival of Saad at the village of Zi-Qar, where he lay encamped with eight thousand men, of whom six thousand came from the tribe of Bakr ibn Wail alone. It was Musanna's intention to join Saad and so advance on Kufa together; but the wounds which he had received in the battle of Jasr grew from bad to worse and he finally succumbed to them. Marching from Saalaba Saad pitched his camp at Mashraf, where Muanna the brother of Musanna met him and communicated to him some important advice bequeathed by the dead chieftain. In pursuance of Omar's order which directed Saad to furnish him with a detailed account of the halting places of the army, the latter drew up a dispatch which contained full information as to the plan of the place, the space occupied by the troops, the manner in which the camp was pitched, and the commissariat arrangements. Omar sent an exhaustive reply conveying numerous instructions as well as directions for regulating the military arrangements. Saad, in accordance with these orders, first reviewed the entire troops which were calculated in round

* Balazuri and Tabari differ from each other in locating the camping ground. The former mentions Saalaba, the latter Zardu. These two places are situated in close proximity to one another.

figures at thirty thousand rank and file. He then divided the troops into separate divisions and entrusted the command of each to a separate officer. The divisions of the troops into the several bodies and the nomination of officers to each of them will, as given by Tabari, appear from the following table:

Division	Name of Officer	Brief account
Vanguard	Zuhra ibn Abdulla ibn Qatada	Was the king of Bahrain in pre-Islamic days; came to the Prophet as representative of his tribe and embraced Islam
Right Flank ...	Abdulla ibn al-Mutasam	Was a Companion
Left Flank ...	Shur-Habil ibn al-Samat	Was a young man who had well distinguished himself in the battle against the renegades
Rearguard ..	Asim ibn Amr al-Tamimi	
Scout-guard ..	Sawad ibn Malik	
Irregulars ..	Salman ibn Rabiat al-Bahili	
Infantry ..	Hammal ibn Malik al-Asadi	
Camel Riders	Abdulla ibn Zil-Sahmin	

Division	Name of Officer	Brief account
Qazi (Judge) and Treasurer	Abdur Rahman ibn Rabiat al-Bahili	
Commissariat Officer	Salman Farsi ...	Famous Companion who hailed from Persia
Translator ...	Hilal Hijri	
Munshi (Scribe)	Ziyad ibn Abi Sufyan	
Physician*		

Of the notables of the various clans, comprising the army corps under the command of Saad, 70 were such of the Companions as had taken part in the battle of Badr, 300 were those who had been present on the occasion of the "*Bai't al-Rizwan.*" There was a similar number of persons from among those who had taken part in the Conquest of Mecca. There were seven hundred of those who, though not Companions, were the descendants of Companions.

Saad was still at Sharaf when he received a fresh order from the Caliph directing him to march from Sharaf and halt at Qadsia.† The order further enjoined upon him to entrench himself in such a manner as to have the plains of Persia in front and

* It is a pity that Tabari has not mentioned the names of the physicians who accompanied the expedition. He only remarks that Omar sent physicians with the army.

† A small town thirty miles from Kufa.

the hills of Arabia on the rear in order that he might advance as far as he chose in case of victory and take refuge by retreating to the hills in case of defeat.

Qadsia was a rich and fertile place and canals and bridges made its position secure. In pre-Islamic days Omar had frequently traversed this part of the country and was, therefore, acquainted with the position and other particulars in connection with this place. Accordingly, in the instructions which he issued to Saad, he described the position and situation of Qadsia. As, however, his description was based on memory of old observations, he desired Saad to submit a complete plan of Qadsia and the surrounding country as soon as he reached there, observing that he had omitted certain salient facts because he was not fully acquainted with particulars as to the position and topography of the spot. Saad, accordingly, submitted the requisite information in full detail.

Having received permission from the Caliph to proceed further, Saad marched from Sharaf and arrived at Ghadib. Here the Persians kept their arsenal and military stores of which the advancing army took possession without striking a blow. On reaching Qadsia, Saad despatched his scouts in every direction to bring intelligence of the enemy. In due time they returned with the news that Farrukh Zad's son Rustam, the chief of Armenia, had been

appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Persian army and, having marched from Madain, was halting at Sabat. Saad apprised Omar of this. Omar wrote in reply that before engaging the Persians in battle an embassy should be despatched with the object of inviting them to the Islamic faith. Saad elected fourteen celebrated personages from among the chieftains of the several tribes. These personages were the very essence of Arabian society in virtue of the various gifts with which they were endowed. Utarid ibn Hajib, Ashaas ibn Qais, Haris ibn Hassan, Asim ibn Omar, Amr Maadi-Karab, Mughira ibn Shuba, and Muanna ibn Harisa were renowned in Arabia for their towering stature and imposing and dignified appearance. Numan ibn Maqran, Basar ibn Abi Raham, Hamla ibn Joya, Hanzala ibn al-Rabi al-Tamimi, Farat ibn Hayan al-Ajli, Adi ibn Suhail, and Mughira ibn Zarara had not their equals in common-sense, tact, judgment and diplomacy.

The ancient capital of the Sasanids was Istakhar, but Nousherwan had given it up for Madain which had ever since continued to be the seat of the Persian government. This place was situated at a distance of thirty or forty miles from Qadsia where Saad had encamped. The ambassadors rode straight to Madain at full gallop. Groups of onlookers gathered to see the cavalcade on their way until they reached and halted near the edifice where the royal court was

held. Although the exterior of these sons of the desert was unprepossessing to such a degree that there were no saddles on their horses and no arms about their persons, yet the light of fearlessness and intrepidity shone from their eyes, which did not fail to impress the spectators. The horses which they rode seemed to court the air and disdain the ground which they were pawing restlessly. Yezdgird heard the sounds thus made and enquired what the noise meant. He was informed of the arrival of the ambassadors of Islam. On hearing this he had his court arrayed in great pomp and splendour and sent for the ambassadors who were then ushered into the court in their flowing Arabian robes with whips in their hands and skin gaiters on. The previous conflicts had established the reputation of the Arabs as redoubtable warriors throughout Persia. Yezdgird, on seeing the imposing mien of the Muslim ambassadors, was inspired with a creeping awe.

The Persians were in the habit of prognosticating events by omens. Yezdgird asked the ambassadors what a mantle was called in Arabic. They replied "*burd.*" Now in the Persian language the word "*burd*" signified "carried off." Yezdgird's superstitious mind regarded this as an evil presage and he ejaculated: "They carry off the world." Then he asked the Arabic synonym for whip. They said that the Arabic word was "*saut.*" Yezdgird took it for "*sokht*" which in Persian meant "burned," and

he exclaimed: "They burned Persia." These evil omens were chafing the entire court, but no one could say anything out of respect for the emperor. Yezdgird then asked the strangers why they came to his country. Numan ibn Maqran, who was the head of the embassy, stepped forward to answer the question. He began by briefly recounting the mission of Islam and its propaganda and wound up his speech by observing that the Musalmans offered two alternatives to the world: the *Jizia* or the sword. Yezdgird made the following answer:

"Do you not recollect that you were the most wretched and miserable people that the world ever saw? Whenever you showed signs of recalcitrance we had only to issue orders to the frontier land-owners who invariably succeeded in crushing your mutinous spirit and humbling you to the dust."

All were silent on hearing Yezdgird's acrid remarks but Mughira ibn Zarara could not brook the studied insult levelled at them. He stood up and spoke in the following terms:

"These personages (pointing towards his companions) are the flower of the Arab nobility and their forbearance and dignity do not permit them to be loquacious. The remarks they made became them, but certain things which were worth saying have remained untold. I take this opportunity of pointing them out. It is true that we were wretched and erring. We slew each other and we buried

our infant daughters alive. But God sent unto us a prophet who was the noblest among us as the scion of the noblest house. At first we opposed him. He spoke the truth and we belied him; he advanced and we receded. Gradually, however, he touched a chord in our hearts. Whatever he said, he said at the bidding of God and whatever he did he did under the command of God. He commanded us to offer this Religion to the whole world. Those who embraced Islam came, he told us, into possession of the same rights as enjoyed by us; those who refused to accept the Islamic faith but agreed to pay *Jizia* were under the protection of Islam, while those who did not acquiesce in either had to face the sword." Yezdgird fell into a fit of towering rage as he heard these bold remarks and said: "None of you would have left this place alive if it were legitimate to put ambassadors to death." Thus saying he ordered a basketful of earth and asked: "Which of you is the most respected of all?" "I," rejoined Asim ibn Omar advancing forward. Yezdgird bid the menials place the basket on Asim's head. Asim immediately galloped off to Saad and said to him. Accept my congratulations for the victory, as the enemy has voluntarily surrendered his territory (referring to the basket of earth) to us.

Hostilities did not commence for several months after the incident above alluded to. Rustam, who had charge of this expedition on the side of Persia,

lay encamped at Sabat and, notwithstanding pressing injunctions urging him to attack the Musalmans forthwith, preferred procrastination. The Musalmans, on the other hand, made it a point to commit minor depredations on the neighbouring villages plundering cattle and other property to replenish their stores of supplies. In the meantime defection worked its way into the Persian ranks and some chieftains on that side came over to throw in their lot with the Musalmans, Jaushan Mah, who was deputed by the Persian government to report the frontier intelligence, was one of those who seceded. This state of things continued for several months and when the Musalmans made it too hot for the neighbouring people they betook themselves to Yezdgird praying for protection and representing that if it was not accorded to them they would have no other alternative but to offer their allegiance to the Arabs. Rustam was now compelled to advance and face the enemy. With an army of sixty thousand he marched from Sabat and pitched his camp at Qadsia. The troops, however, committed great many unlawful things on their march. All the officers slaked their thirst with wine and wallowed in voluptuousness holding light the chastity of the daughters and wives of the people. These things caused much disaffection and the people began to think that the fate of the Persian empire was sealed.

Saad had his scouts and spies posted on all sides on the day on which Rustam's forces marched from Sabat, to be hourly apprised of everything. He also deputed several military officers to ascertain the condition, order and position of the Persian army. This, of course, necessitated an occasional brush with the enemy. Talaiha one night managed to get into Rustam's army under disguise. He saw a beautiful horse of rare value tethered somewhere and severing the cord which held the animal, fastened it to the bridle of his own horse. Presently, however, some soldiers awoke and followed him. The person to whom the horse belonged was a renowned officer and such was his strength and skill that he was reckoned a match for a thousand horsemen. Coming close up to Talaiha he dealt him a mighty thrust with his spear. Talaiha dexterously avoided the blow and his adversary was hurled to the ground by the force of his own unchecked momentum. In his turn Talaiha now bent over his prostrate antagonist and pierced him through with his spear. Of the two other horsemen who were beside the slain officer, one was also killed in the short but fierce struggle but the other was spared by Talaiha as he promised to follow his captor as a prisoner. By this time all the troops were wide awake and up. They rushed at the solitary warrior from all directions. Talaiha made a sudden forward dash and cut his way through a

thick mass of adversaries without receiving any palpable harm and leaving behind an army of sixty thousand baffled and discomfited. The prisoner on coming before Saad embraced Islam and said that the two horsemen slain by Talaiha were his cousins and that each of them was reckoned in prowess to be a match for a thousand men. The prisoner after accepting Islam was named Muslim and he revealed many a secret of the enemy's force which could not have otherwise been discovered. He took part in all the later engagements and displayed great bravery and sacrifice on every occasion.

As Rustam seemed inclined to avoid fighting he once more opened peace negotiations. He sent a message to Saad requesting him to depute one of his trusted men with whom the matter might be discussed. Saad deputed Rabi ibn Amir, who chose to appear before Rustam in a strange appearance. He fashioned for himself a coat of mail from the felt pads, which are placed under saddles, and wound a piece of the same shabby material round his head. A piece of rope, entwined round the waist, served him as a girdle and he wrapped the scabbard of his sword in tattered rags. In this strange guise he mounted his horse and wended his way to Rustam's camp who, on the other hand, had adorned his court with unwonted splendour and pomp to give audience to the Musalman ambassador. The entire court was carpeted with cloth of gold, the pillows

were of a sumptuous material of golden texture, the curtains and hangings were of rich silk, while a gem bedecked throne was placed in the centre. Rabi came right up to the richly carpeted floor and dismounting from his horse attached the reins to a pillow.

The courtiers feigning indifference desisted from making any remarks but, as usual on such occasions, they desired Rabi to leave his arms outside. Rabi said in reply that he had come on invitation and that if they did not like him to come armed he would retrace his way back. Rustam was apprised of this and he permitted the ambassador to be ushered in armed as he was. Rabi slowly advanced towards the throne with a nonchalant air but all the while he was piercing the sumptuous carpets with the point of his spear which had served him as a staff, thus causing many a slit in the rich carpets and spoiling them altogether. Reaching near the throne Rabi brought his spear with full force against the ground which piercing the floor cloth stuck fast in the ground. Rustam now asked him: "What is your object in coming into this country?"

"Because we want to restore the worship of the Creator instead of the created," said Rabi in reply.

Rustam then observed that he would give a definite reply after holding a consultation with the

chief dignitaries of the empire. The courtiers of Rustam again and again pressed round Rabi to examine his accoutrements and with ill-suppressed ridicule asked him: "Is it with such materials that you have undertaken the conquest of Persia?" But when Rabi drew his sword from the scabbard it seemed to them as if a flash of lightning had burst upon their vision and when bucklers were produced to test the edge and the quality of the weapon Rabi hacked and hewed them to pieces. He then left the Persian camp but negotiations continued for some time afterwards.

The last ambassadorial visit was paid by Mughira. The Persians did their utmost to set up the levee held by them to advantage. All the principal dignitaries and officers wore gold coronets and were seated on chairs. The floor of the audience canopy was covered with ermine and silk carpets. Rows of lackeys and functionaries were arrayed on either side. Mughira, dismounting from his horse, advanced straight towards the centre of the canopy and seated himself at Rustam's side. This presumption gave provocation to everybody, so much so that the mace-bearers pulled him off the throne. Mughira addressed the officers of the court in these terms: "I did not come of my own accord, but because you had invited me. I was, therefore, your guest and as a guest I did not merit this unbecoming treatment at your hands. Like you it is not customary among us that

one individual should sit as a god while others should bow down before him like so many slaves." These stirring words when translated by the Court interpreter whose name was Abud and who was a native of Hira, produced a marked effect upon the whole assembly and some of them exclaimed: "We were mistaken in regarding such people with contempt."

Rustam, too, was put out of countenance and endeavoured to justify his conduct by throwing the blame on the shoulders of the lackeys who, he said, had done the thing without his initiative. He then assumed an air of familiarity and taking out a few arrows from Mughira's sheaf said: "What effect will these spindles take?" Mughira retorted: "Flames of fire, although they do not dart out in hissing tongues, can still burn." Rustam then examined the scabbard of his sword and said: "Oh it is quite rotten." To this Mughira replied: "Maybe, but the sword has just been whetted and its edge is very keen." After exchanging these innuendoes they began to talk business. Rustam dwelt at great length on the grandeur and glory of the Persian Empire and then observed in a patronising way (as if to confer a favour), that if the Musalmans turned back even now, no offence would be taken; on the other hand a remuneration of some sort might be bestowed upon them. Mughira placed his hand on the hilt of his sword and said: "If you do not accept either Islam or the *Jizia*, this will decide the

matter." Rustam flew into a towering fit of rage and exclaimed: "By the Sun! I shall annihilate the whole of Arabia tomorrow." Mughira came away and all hopes of peace were terminated.

CHAPTER IX

THE BATTLE AND FALL OF QADSIA*
14 A.H./635 A.D.

RUSTAM'S policy of war had up to this time been summed up in the word 'procrastination,' but Mughira's remark gave such a shock to his sense of honour that he ordered his troops to get ready for action at once. The intervening canal was choked up and converted into a road at his bidding ere the dawn of morning. Before noon the entire Persian army had crossed the canal. Rustam now armed himself *cap a pie*, clad in a double set of complete armour and accoutred with the requisite weapons he mounted his war steed and cried out with vehemence ; "Tomorrow I will dash the whole of Arabia to pieces." A soldier who was standing close to him ventured the remark : "Yes if it is the will of God." "Even if God does not will it I will accomplish my purpose," rejoined Rustam.

Rustam displayed great skill in arraying the troops in battle order. He placed them thirteen

* Qadsia was a famous city of Iraq-Arab and was situated in the centre of the Madain-Sabaa. It is now in ruins. In our map it may be regarded as lying in close proximity to Madain.

deep and backed the centre by elephants on whose backs armed soldiers were seated. The right and left wings were also supported by rows of elephants placed behind them. Men were posted at certain intervals between the seat of war and the Capital to convey intelligence. The man posted at the seat of war cried aloud the particulars of an incident that took place to the next man and thus the relay of intermediary criers communicated the news to Madain with marvellous rapidity.

There was an old royal palace at Qadsia which stood just at the extremity of the battle-field. Saad was suffering from sciatica and being unable to move about could not personally take part in the action. He therefore entrusted the command of the Musalman force to Khalid ibn Arfata, and himself took a seat in the upper storey of the palace from where, propped up by pillows, he could obtain a full view of the scene of battle. The action, however, was conducted by him personally. Whenever he wanted to give any command he wrote it on slips of paper and rolling them into globules flung them down towards Khalid who changed his tactics according to the plan described therein. It is surprising that the art of war should have made such a marvellous progress in the initial stages of civilization and it does credit to the subtle genius and martial skill of the Arabs.

When the forces had been arrayed in the order

of battle, the famous poets and orators of Arabia advanced from the files and by their fiery and stirring declamations made the hearts of the troops tingle with enthusiasm. Shamakh, Hutayy, Aus ibn Maghra, Abda ibn al-Tayyab and Amr Maadi-Karab among the poets, and Qais ibn Habira, Ghalib, Ibn al-Hazil al-Asadi, Basr ibn Abi Rahm al-Jahni, Asim ibn Amr, Rabi Saadi and Rabi ibn Amir among the orators were haranguing the troops on the battle-field, and it seemed as if the whole army had been enchanted by a sorcerer's magic wand. Some expressions in these harangues are worth remembering. For instance these were the words of Ibn al-Hazil al-Asadi:

"O warriors of the house of Saad! turn your swords into an impenetrable wall of steel, rush upon your antagonists like so many roaring lions, donn the panoply of dust and turn your eyes downwards. When you have done with swords then let the arrows fly, for swords cannot reach where arrows find their way."

Readers of the Quran then came forward and began to recite verses from the chapter on 'Jihad' in forceful cadence which stirred the hearts and brought on the intoxication of enthusiasm.

As usual, Saad shouted out the war cry three times and at the fourth cry the fighting began. A Persian archer, who wore a silk tunic, a golden belt and a pair of gold bangles, rode forth into the field and Amr Maadi-Karab came out of the

Musalman ranks to engage him. The Persian set an arrow to his bow and taking aim shot with such accuracy that his adversary narrowly escaped from being transfixed. Maadi-Karab spurred his charger forward. Coming close to his antagonist he caught hold of the latter's girdle, lifted him off his saddle, hurled him to the ground and severing his head with one blow of the sword coolly turned to his comrades and said: "This is the manner in which fighting is done." "Everybody cannot become Maadi-Karab," rejoined his companions-in-arm.

After this other combatants rode forth into the lists from both sides and displayed their valour and skill. The fight then became general. The Persians caused their elephants to charge on the Bahila squadron, which was the most distinguished of the Arab cavalry. The sight of these black moving rocks was unfamiliar to the Arab horses and they shied and bolted all of a sudden. The infantry maintained a firm and unflinching front but the charge of elephants made them also stagger. Seeing this Saȧd instantly issued commands to the tribe of Asad to relieve the Bahila. Talaiha, the chieftain of that tribe and a renowned warrior, said to his people: "Dear children of my tribe! remember that in asking aid of you Saad has evidently reckoned upon something." The tribesmen, animated by this remark, pressed their steeds and putting their

lances in rest attacked the elephants. The courage and tenacity with which they fought stemmed the tide of this dark mass of stupendous energy for a moment, but the Persians, leaving the Bahila, brought all their strength to bear on the small troop of horse who had come to the rescue. Saad now sent word to the tribesmen of Tamim, who were famous archers and lancers, asking them whether their skill could be of any avail against the elephants. Hearing this they advanced in a body and rained such a blinding shower of arrows as to knock down all the elephant riders. Then coming closer they turned the open canopied seats on the elephants upside down. The fray continued till dusk. It was not before total darkness had enveloped the face of things that the opposing armies withdrew from the field of battle. This was the first engagement in the campaign of Qadsia and is called the "Yaum al-Ars" in Arabic.

While Saad from his seat upstairs, was conducting the battle in the field and controlling the tactics of his troops, his wife Salma was also seated by his side. When the Persians goaded their elephants forward and the Musalmans were pushed back, Saad was writhing in an agony of rage and was impatiently tossing himself from side to side. Salma, on seeing this, could not restrain the ejaculation: "What a pity Musanna was not here to-day." Cut to the quick, Saad gave her a slap on the face and said:

"What could have Musanna done even if he were present." Salma retorted: "I wonder the cowards have also a sense of honour," by which she alluded to the fact that Saad did not personally take part in the battle.

Next day Saad had the dead bodies of the slain, which lay scattered in the battle-field, interred, while the wounded were made over to the women to be dressed and nursed. He then ordered the troops to prepare for action. Fighting had not yet commenced when a cloud of dust was seen to arise from the direction of Syria. As it cleared, it became known that the reinforcements despatched by Abu Obaida from Syria had arrived. When preparing for the invasion of Iraq Omar had issued an order to Abu Obaida, who was incharge of the Syrian expedition, directing him to bid the troops, which had been transferred from Iraq to Syria, to hurry up and join Saad. These troops arrived just at the right moment and were considered a godsend. The total strength of this relieving column was six thousand, of which five thousand men belonged to the clans of Rabi and Mazar, while one thousand were the natives of Hijaz. Hashim ibn Utba, Saad's brother, was the commander of this column and Qaaqa headed its vanguard. Immediately on arriving at the scene of action Qaaqa rode forward and called out to the Persians: "If anyone from among you wants to test his courage let him

come out and try conclusions with me." On hearing this Bahman issued from the Persian ranks. Qaaqa saw him and the event of Jasr flashed across his memory. It wrung from him the spontaneous cry: "Here comes the slayer of Abu Obaida, see that he does not escape." The two adversaries met swords in hand and after some cuts and thrusts Bahman was slain. Then a series of single combats ensued in which the warriors of both sides were mortally engaged. Shahr-Braz, the prince of Sistan, was killed at the hands of Aur ibn Qatba, while Bazurch-Mehar of Hamdan, a noted warrior, was slain by Qaaqa. In short, before the battle assumed a general aspect, the Persian army had lost many of its renowned knights. Still the two armies attacked each other with an impetuosity which it is hard to conceive.

The relieving forces from Syria had been despatched by Qaaqa in small bands. As one band reached the battle-field, another appeared from afar, and thus troops continued pouring in all the day long. This manœuvre of Qaaqa produced awe-inspiring effect upon the Persians. Each band arrived with deafening cries of "*Allah Akbar*" and headed by Qaaqa attacked the enemy.

In order to make up the deficiency under which the Saracenic army laboured from want of elephants, Qaaqa had recourse to a very ingenious device. He had some camels enveloped in fantastic housings

and covered their heads with flowing vestments which gave them a weird and frightful appearance. On whichever side these artificial mammoths went the horses of the Persians shied and got out of control.

Just when the battle was raging furiously messengers from Omar arrived with a number of choicest Arab steeds of rare value, and priceless swords of exquisite workmanship. These men called out aloud to the troops that the *Amir al-Mominin* had sent these gifts to be conferred as a reward upon those persons alone who could earn them. The recipients of these gifts were, Hammal ibn Malik, Rabil ibn Amr, Talaiha ibn Khuwailad, and Asim ibn Omar al-Tamimi to each of whom Qaaqa gave a sword. Four warriors of the Yarbu clan received the horses. Rabil in a paroxysm of pride uttered the following extemporaneous verses:

Full well do all the people know
That foremost do I rank 'mongst those
Who sharp and slender blades received
When loud the din of battle rose.

While the fray was raging at its hottest, Abu Mahjan Saqfi, a renowned warrior and a famous poet, whom Saad had incarcerated for the offence of indulging in wine, was watching the course of contest from the window of his prison and was chafing like a caged lion at the idea of being debarred from taking part in the heroic scene being enacted outside.

At last, when he could brook it no longer, he approached Salma, wife of Saad, and beseeched her, for the love of God, to release him, telling her that if he survived the fray he would come back and put on the fetters himself. Salma refused the request. Poor Abu Mahjan returned disappointed and disconsolate to his dungeon and began to recite the following verses over and over again in a pathetic tone:

> Alack! Alack! My sorrow's cup
> Is full to brim. My comrades free
> Are tilling out on yonder field
> All shackled while I lie; ah me!
> These ponderous fetters weigh me down,
> My efforts are of no avail;
> The doors are shut, in vain I cry,
> Oh shall I never quit this jail?

These lines moved Salma so much that entering the prison she undid Abu Mahjan's fetters with her own hands. As soon as he found himself free Abu Mahjan rushed straight to the stable and saddling Saad's horse, which was known by the name of Balqa, mounted and galloped off to the field of battle. Spear in hand he passed like a whirlwind from the right to the left wing of the Muslim army on his prancing steed and then wheeling about he dashed against the enemy with such irresistible force that all gave way before him and slaying about right and left he placed whole ranks *hors de combat*. Soon the attention of everyone of his comrades was drawn

towards the redoubtable knight whose terrible onset had proved so fatal to the Persians, and they wondered who he could be. Saad too was surprised and was inclined from the manner of his attack to identify the unknown warrior as Abu Mahjan but then he remembered that Abu Mahjan was incarcerated in a dungeon. As evening fell, Abu Mahjan came back to his prison and put on the fetters himself. Salma related all this to Saad. Saad at once released the prisoner and said : "By Allah! I cannot inflict punishment upon the person who proves his devotion to Islam in such a manner." "By Allah! I shall never taste wine after this," cried Abu Mahjan.*

Khansa, † a famous poetess of Arabia, had taken part in this battle accompanied by her four sons. When the action commenced she addressed them: "Dear sons! your country was not weary of you nor did famine stare you in the face ; but for all that you brought your old mother here and placed her at the mercy of Persia. By Allah you are the children of the same father as you are children of the same mother. I have not been unfaithful to your father, nor have I cast a slur on the reputation of your maternal uncle.

* *Kitab al-Kharaj* of Qazi Abu Yusuf, p. 18.

† Khansa's memoirs are wonderful and a vein of unflagging interest runs throughout them. Her poetical works have been published at Beirut and her complete account will be met in *Kitab al-Aghani* of the learned Abul Faraj Isphahani. Her elegies have been unsurpassed. At the fair of Ukaz a flag was wont to float over the door of her tent on which were written the words "the best of Arabian elegiasts." She embraced Islam and visited the Court of Omar.

Now go and fight to the last."

The sons put spurs to their horses at the same time and fell upon the enemy. When she lost sight of them Khansa raised her hands towards heaven and fervently prayed: "O God do Thou protect my sons!"

On this day the number of casualties on the Muslim and the Persian sides were two thousand and ten thousand respectively. The event, however, remained undecided. This engagement is known by the name of "Aghwas". The third battle is designated "Yaum al-Amas." Qaaqa hit upon a new device in this battle. At nightfall he ordered a few squadrons of cavalry, and a few companies of infantry to leave the camp and bivouac at some distant spot in the direction of Syria. He then gave them to understand that at daybreak a squadron of one hundred horsemen was to gallop towards the battle-field, the other squardons to follow in rapid succession. Accordingly, early in the morning, the first squadron of cavalry galloped reeking with haste. The whole Musalman army simultaneously uttered the cry of "*Allah Akbar*" and it was trumpeted forth on all sides that fresh reinforcements had arrived. Action commenced forthwith. Now, as fortune would have it, Hisham whom Abu Obaida had despatched from Syria with a flying column to reinforce Saad, arrived with seven hundred horsemen just at this moment. Yezdgird was being apprised every moment of what was

taking place at the seat of war, and he was continuously despatching reinforcements. Hisham addressed the troops in the terms: "Your brethren have reduced Syria. God's promise with regard to the conquest of Persia will now be fulfilled at your hands." As usual the commencement of the battle was marked by single combats. A Persian warrior entered the lists roaring like a lion. His grand physique and huge proportions inspired awe and the slight built Arab soldiers hesitated to confront him. Such was the irony of fate, however, that this veritable Goliath was slain at the hands of a comparatively weak adversary. The Persians, gathering experience from past events, had posted groups of infantry on the right and left of the elephants. Amr Maadi-Karab said to his comrades: "I attack yonder elephant, you stick close to my side for, if Maadi-Karab were killed, no one will ever fill his place." Thus saying he drew his sword from its scabbard and rushed at the elephant. The infantry on either side, however, flew at him all of a sudden and he was hidden from the view of his followers in the storm of dust which now arose. Seeing their leader in danger they came to the rescue and it was only after a severe and sanguinary contest that the enemy fell back. Amr Maadi-Karab was in a woeful plight. From top to toe he was encased, as it were, in a sheath of dust and his body was covered all over with gaping wounds which the enemy's spears had

inflicted. Still he was holding his sword with a firm grasp and was slaying about furiously. At this moment a Persian horseman passed close to him. Maadi-Karab caught hold of his horse's tail. The Persian furiously drove his spurs to the horse's flanks over and over again but in vain. At last the horseman jumped down and ran away while Maadi-Karab sprang on to the horse's back.

Saad, seeing that frequent and terrible gaps were being made in the Muslim ranks by the charge of elephants, sent for Zakham and Salam, who were Persians but had embraced the Islamic Faith, and asked them if nothing could avail against that herd of sable monsters. They replied that the only remedy was to destroy the trunks and eyes of the beasts. Prominent among the whole herd were two elephants whose unusually fearful aspect and huge size distinguished them from the rest and made them, as it were, the leaders of the lot. One was named Abyaz and the other Ajrab. Saad sent for Qaaqa, Asim, Hammal and Rabil and, imparting the necessary hints, told them that the success of the undertaking rested solely with them. Qaaqa, first of all, sent a number of horsemen and foot soldiers with directions to form a cordon round the elephants. He then personally advanced, spear in hand, on the white elephant, Asim accompanying him. Both simultaneously directed their spears with

such accurate skill as to transfix the eyes of the beast. In an excruciating agony of pain the animal reeled back. No sooner had he done so than Qaaqa with his sword dealt him a tremendous blow on the trunk which was severed from the forehead. In the meantime Rabil and Hammal had attacked Ajrab and met with similar success. The wounded beast turned round and bolted. The rest of the elephants seeing him fly followed suit and in a moment this black cloud rolled away altogether.

Free scope was now given to the warriors to revel in their heroic aspirations. One of the bloodiest and noisiest forays ever contested now ensued. Shouts of combatants rent the air and shook the ground. Hence this engagement goes by the appellation of *Lailat al-Harir* (the night of rumbling noises). The Persian generals rearranged their troops and placed the centre column and the right and the left wings thirteen deep. The Musalmans also gathered their force together and arrayed them in three columns one behind another. The cavalry was placed foremost and infantry behind it while the archers were placed in the rear. Saad's command was that the assault should be led at the third cry of *Allah Akbar*. But the Persian archers had already commenced their work, so Qaaqa could restrain himself no longer. With the troops under his command he attacked the enemy even before the required number of cries of *Allah Akbar* was

called. This was a breach of discipline but the aspect of the foray and the enthusiasm of Qaaqa involuntarily elicited from Saad the remark: "O God pardon Qaaqa and aid him." Qaaqa's example was followed by the Banu Asad and the conduct of the latter impelled the clans of Nakha, Bahila and Kinda to pursue a similar course. As each clan attacked the enemy, Saad was heard to say: "O God pardon and aid them." The cavalry led the assault but the Persian forces formed an impenetrable wall of living bricks, and they fought with so much resolution and firmness that the Muslim horsemen could not shake them. Seeing this every warrior jumped from his horse and commenced the attack on foot.

One of the Persian squadrons was clad in armour from head to foot. The clan of Hamiza attacked it but their swords rebounded harmlessly against the steel cuirasses. The chieftain of the clan set up the war whoop. They told him that their swords were useless against corselets. This enraged him and he hurled his spear with terrific force at a Persian warrior transfixing him through his abdomen. The example of their chief infused fresh courage and resolution into the clansmen and they fought with so much vigour and bravery that they annihilated the whole of the squadron.

The battle raged the livelong night. The warriors were completely worn out by continuous fight-

ing. Tired and drowsy their limbs could no longer stand them in good stead. The event, however, remained still undecided. Qaaqa in one last and mighty effort resolved to force the result. He selected several renowned warriors from among the chiefs of the clans and made a rush in the direction of Rustam the Commander-in-Chief of the Persian army. Seeing this, Qais, Ashaas, Amr Maadi-Karab and Ibn Zil-Bardain, who were the respective chieftains of their own clans, cried out to their retainers: "Mind that yonder warriors do not outstrip you in the race for the service of God." Other chiefs, too, who in addition to being bold warriors had the orator in them, stood before their clans and with powerful and stirring effusions of eloquence set the fire of their audience's enthusiasm ablaze. Horsemen jumped down from their horses and, throwing bows and arrows aside, unsheathed their swords. Thus the whole Muslim army impelled by one spirit, and goaded, as it were, by a superhuman energy, made a desperate rush before which everything gave way. Firzan and Hurmozan were driven back, inch by inch, by this living mass of onward force which at last approached Rustam. Seated on a throne Rustam was controlling the manœvures of his troops and issuing constant orders. When he saw the Arabs swarming in from all sides he jumped down from his throne and manfully bore the brunt of the attack made on him for a while.

At last, well-nigh spent with wounds, he fled. A trooper named Hilal pursued him. A brook obstructed his passage and he plunged into it to swim across and save himself. Hilal, too, jumped after him and catching hold of his legs dragged him ashore. He then killed Rustam with his sword and flung the dead body under the hoofs of mules. Then mounting the vacant throne he exclaimed aloud: "I have killed Rustam."* The exclamation made the Persians turn their eyes towards the throne and found it devoid of their Commander-in-Chief. Instantly there was a complete rout. Every Persian soldier fled for his life. The Musalmans commenced a hot chase and slew the fugitives by thousands.

It is a pity that our poet-laureate (Firdawsi), in a fit of national enthusiasm, has entirely misstated this event. He says:

> Like thunder roared the warriors twain,
> On rushed the chargers fleet:
> Thus Saad and Rustam did at last
> In mortal combat meet.
> When heat of fray and smell of blood
> Had darkened Rustam's sight,
> The valiant Saad with steady nerve
> Vanquished his foe outright.

*The learned Balazuri says that the name of Rustam's slayer is not known, but it is certain that Amr Maadi-Karab, Talaiha ibn Khuwailad and Fart ibn Jamah had all three attacked the Persian generalissimo. Our own account is based upon a tradition of the *Akhbar al-Tiwal.*

The poet does not even know that Saad had not personally taken part in the event in so far as fighting was concerned.

Even after the rout, certain captains of renown, who were the chiefs of separate principalities, remained on the battle-field and continued to fight. Of these Shahryar, Ibn al-Harbad, Farkhan Ahwazi and Khusro Shanum Hamdani died manfully on the field. Hurmozan, Ahwad and Qaran, however, made the best of the first opportunity of flight that presented itself to them. The number of Persians killed could not be calculated. The casualties on the Musalman side were more or less six thousand.

As Saad had not personally taken part in this battle, the troops regarded him with mistrust. These suspicions were so wide-spread as to make a poet exclaim :

> I fought and fought till, in its time,
> We got the aid Divine,
> But all the time, at Qadsia's gate,
> Did listless Saad recline.
> As from the campaign we returned,
> Full many a widowed dame
> Our sorrowing eyes met here and there,
> Those of Saad not the same.

These lines were immediately on the tip of everybody's tongue. Saad heard them and gathering all the troops together showed them the tender sores of his blisters which proved his inability.

Saad communicated the news of the victory to Omar and, in his despatch, gave a detailed account of the casualties on both sides. Ever since the commencement of the campaign of Qadsia Omar used to go out of Medina at day-break and watch for the messenger from the seat of war. One day he went out of the city according to his wont when he saw a camel rider speeding from the opposite direction. Omar eagerly advanced and asked him where he was coming from. The camel rider was Saad's messenger who had brought the welcome news of victory. On learning that such was the case Omar began to make enquiries from him. He answered that God had conferred success upon the Musalmans. Omar was running by the side of the camel and plied its rider with questions. The camel rider on entering the precincts of the city found that every man whom they passed addressed his companion on foot as "*Amir al-Mominin.*" He trembled with fear and said: "My lord! why did you not tell me your name so that I may not have been unwittingly guilty of this presumption." Omar reassured him observing: "Do not be uneasy. There is no harm done. Go on with your news." So he walked by the side of the camel rider all the way to his house. Then, convening a large gathering of the Medinites, he communicated the joyful tidings to them and made an eloquent and stirring speech which ended thus: "O Musalmans! I am not a king that it

should be my desire to make you my slaves. I am myself a slave of God though the responsibilities of the Caliphate have been made to be heavy upon my head. I should deem myself fortunate if I served you in a manner that secured you sound and tranquil sleep in your homes, but I would be a miserable wretch if it were my desire to make you wait constantly upon me and mount guard at my portals. It is my object to instruct you not by words but by deeds."

Some of the Persians or Arabs who had taken part in the campaign of Qadsia against the Musalmans had not intended to run the gauntlet of the Musalmans alone, but were forced to throw in their lot with the Persian army. Several people had left their homes for fear of being made to fight against their will. After the Musalmans were victorious these men came to Saad and asked for quarter. Saad addressed the Caliph on the subject. Omar assembled the Companions and invited their opinion. All unanimously declared that quarter should be given when it was sought for. In short, peace was restored throughout the land which had so recently been the scene of war and bloodshed. People who had fled away from their homes came back and resettled there. Cordial relations sprang up between the rulers and the ruled, the intimate nature of which may be judged from the fact that several members of the ruling class formed matrimonial alliances with the daughters of the land which they had conquered.

After their flight from Qadsia the Persians had quartered themselves at Babal. As this was a strong and fortified place they had reorganised their shattered forces and making all preparations for war had nominated Firozan as their Commander-in-Chief. With a view to their extirpation Saad made up his mind to march upon Babal in the year 15 A.H./637 A.D. He accordingly deputed a few chiefs to march in advance and clear the way of all impediments. This precaution was well advised as Basiri opposed the vanguard at Burs. He was, however, defeated and fled to join the main Persian army at Babal. Bustam, the chief of Burs, came to terms with the Musalmans and proved such a good ally as to cause several bridges to be erected *en route* to Babal, with a view to facilitating the passage of the Muslim army across the intervening brooks and streams. At Babal the two forces met. But although chiefs of great renown, such as Nakhirjan, Hurmozan, Mehran, Mehrjan and others led the Persian army, they could not stem the tide of the tempestuous valour of the Musalmans, and were put to flight at the very first onset. Saad himself made a halt at Babal and sent forward some troops under the command of Zuhra. The Persian forces, after their defeat at Babal, had fallen back on Kusa and were now under the command of Shahryar, who was a chieftain of renown. When Zuhra arrived at Kusa, Shahryar opposed him and coming personally into the battle-field challenged the

bravest of the Arabs to meet him in single combat. Zuhra said: "I had intended to try a joust with you, but in view of your braggar-vaunting some slave will confront you." Thus saying he motioned Nabil, a slave of the Tamim clan, who pressed his charger forward. Shahryar had the proportions and strength of a giant. Seeing in Nabil a weak and puny adversary he flung away his lance and grasping him by the throat pulled him off his horse and hurled him to the ground and then sat upon the chest of the prostrate man. Now, as chance would have it, the thumb of one of Shahryar's hands fell into Nabil's mouth. Nabil bit it so severely that Shahryar was fairly beside himself with pain. Nabil availing himself of the opportunity sprang up lightly and sitting on the breast of his adversary plunged his sword deep down into the body of Shahryar ripping his entrails open. Shahryar was clad in brilliant robes and armed with excellent weapons. Nabil rifled him of all these and placed them before Saad. In order to teach his followers a lesson Saad ordered Nabil to put on the dress and armour of the slain warrior. In pursuance of this command Nabil, arrayed in the gaudy effects and splendid accoutrement of Shahryar, came before the public assembly and as the people saw him, the vivid spectacle of the mutations of the world and the fickleness of fortune passed before their eyes.

Kusa was a historical place where Namrod is said to have imprisoned Abraham. The dungeon

was still preserved as a relic. Saad paid a visit to this sanctuary and praying for peace to the ashes of the blessed Patriarch recited this verse from the Quran: "These are the mutations of ages to which We have made mankind subject." At some distance from Kusa was Bahra Sher, a city situated in proximity to the capital. A body of royal dragoons was posted here and they were wont to swear a solemn oath everyday and exclaim that the Persian Empire could not come to grief as long as they lived. There was a tamed lion in the city, who was a great pet of Kisra and hence the city was called Bahra Sher (The Lion lair). As the forces of Saad approached the city the beast sprang forward and rushed at the foremost rank. Hashim, the vanguard Captain, however, dealt him such a well-directed blow with his sword that the beast was instantly killed. Saad forthwith imprinted a kiss on the brow of the heroic officer for his valorous conduct.

Saad advanced and laid siege to Bahra Sher and some of the troops scattering in all directions captured a thousand men. Shahrzad the chieftain of Sabat pleaded with Saad on behalf of the prisoners and told him that it was no use capturing them as they were ordinary peasants. Saad accordingly had their names registered and set them at liberty. The neighbouring cheiftains, one and all, accepted the terms of the *Jizia*, but the city still held out. The siege continued for full two months, the Persians

making occasional sallies. One day they made a desperate resolve to fight to the bitter end. So they sallied forth firing volleys of arrows. The Musalmans met this onslaught in an equal spirit. Zuhra, an officer of great renown who was always in the thick of the fight, had the rings of his armour broken in several spots. When his soldiers advised him to don a new substitute he replied that fortune could not possibly favour him so far as to turn the arrows of the enemy towards him, leaving all aside. Such was, however, the eccentricity of fate that the very first arrow struck him. People pressed forward to draw it out but he prevented them saying that his life would last only so long as the arrow remained in his body. In the same state, therefore, he rushed upon the enemy and killed Shahrbraz, a famous officer, with a blow of his sword. After showing fight for some time the Persians took to flight and the citizens hoisted the flag of peace.

Tigris alone intervened between Bahra Sher and Madain. Saad, on marching from Bahra Sher had, of course, to cross the river, but the Persians had demolished and broken all the bridges. When Saad arrived at the bank of the Tigris he found neither bridge nor boat. He turned towards the troops and addressed them thus: "My brethren-in-faith! you see that the enemy hard pressed has now been compelled to seek refuge on the other side of the river: one victory more and the coast is clear."

Thus saying he charged right into the surging waters. The troops, emboldened by his laudable example, followed suit and all rushed their horses into the river. The river was deep and boisterous but its turbulent elements could hardly affect the resolute and undaunted spirit of the Muslim army. The waves dashed furiously against the sides of the horses but the horsemen steered their course coolly in perfect order. Stirrup to stirrup and shoulder to shoulder they glided over the frowning surface of the stream chatting gaily all the while as if they were going on a holiday and not even the slightest disorder was visible in the marching array of the cavalry; not one column deviated an inch from its position. The Persians on the opposite bank were gazing at this wonderful scene in stupefaction. When the Musalmans came quite close to the bank the Persians began to think that they had to deal not with men but with genii. Possessed of this idea they cried out: "They are giants, they are giants,"* and fled in wild disorder. The Commander-in-Chief, Kharzad, however, with a small body of resolute officers remained on the battle-field and posted bands of archers along the river bank. One of these advanced into the water and tried to check the course of the Musalmans, but the latter swept forward like the rising tide bearing down the archers before them like so many bits of straw and in a few moments stood on the

* These words are quoted by Tabari.

opposite bank. Yezdgird had already sent his wives and the princes and princesses of the blood royal to Hulwan. When the news of this defeat reached him, he himself abandoned the city and fled. As Saad entered Madain he found silence reigning everywhere supreme. The sight moved him deeply and he could not but give utterance to the following verses from the Quran:

"They have left many a garden, fountain, park, arbour and riches which they used to enjoy. Thus it is that We put later people in possession thereof."

In the palace of Kisra the pulpit was set up in place of the royal throne and the Friday prayers were said therein. This was the first Friday service that was performed in Iraq. Our theologians will be surprised to note that, although Saad was one of the prominent Companions and had been associated with the Prophet for years together, he failed to follow the example of Alamgir and Mahmud and permitted the entire statuary in the palace to remain intact.*

After a sojourn of two or three days Saad ordered that the treasures and curiosities of the royal palaces should be brought and accumulated in one place. There were vast riches comprising thousands of rare and priceless heirlooms transmitted and preserved from the Kayani dynasty

* The learned Tabari, who was also a great Traditionist, has described this event at full length.

down to the time of Nousherwan such as the coats of mail and swords of the monarchs of the Celestial Empire of China, the Raja Dahar, the Emperor of Rome, Numan ibn Munzir, Siawash and Bahram Chobin; the poniards of Kisra, Hurmuz and Qaiqubad and the gem bedizened crown and kingly robes of Nousherwan. There was a horse of solid and burnished gold: a silver saddle fastened to its back and rubies and emeralds set on its breast. Then there was a she-camel of silver with back-saddles of gold and the leading string studded with priceless rubies while its rider was glittering with precious gems from top to toe. But the most wonderful and exquisitely magnificent of all was a carpet which the Persians called the 'Spring.' After the season of 'ethereal mildness' passed away this carpet was used for the feast of wine. Hence the carpet was provided with all the paraphernalia of Spring which art and wealth could assay to imitate. In the centre was a parterre of verdure bordered on all sides with ornamental avenues around which trees and plants of various descriptions grew laden with buds and flowers and fruits. Strangest of all, everything was worked in gold, silver and precious stones. The ground work was of gold, the verdure of emerald, the borders of topaz, the trees of gold and silver; the leaves of silk and the fruits of gems.

All these vast riches had been secured by the troops in the general booty, but the soldiers were

so scrupulous and honest that whatever they got, they brought intact to their officers. When everything had been arranged and the field glittered with their sheeny lustre far and wide, Saad himself was greatly amazed. He expressed his astonishment over and over again, every time making the remark that men who did not touch such tempting treasures must indeed be exceptionally honest.

The booty, as usual, was distributed among the troops, a fifth portion being despatched to the Caliph's Court. The carpet and other ancient relics were sent in their entirety so that the Arabs might view the spectacle of the grandeur and magnificence of Persia as well as of the might and glory of Islam. When these treasures were spread before Omar, he too was struck with the honesty and contentment of the Muslim soldiers.

There was a person named Mahlam in Medina, whom nature had endowed with more than usual share of symmetry and grace. Omar ordered that he should be dressed in the robes of Nousherwan. These costumes were manifold and each was intended for a separate occasion *i.e.* one for riding, another for the court, another for the levee and yet another for festal fêtes. Mahlam was dressed in all these costumes one after another. When he wore the special and most magnificent raiment and put on the gem bedizened crown the eyes of the spectators were dazed and they continued gazing at

him with unabated astonishment for a long time. With regard to the celebrated carpet the public opinion was that it should not be distributed but be preserved; Omar himself inclined towards this view, but Ali persistently held aloof and at his instance the 'Spring' also had to suffer from the ravages of the inexorable 'autumn' and the tapestry of the grandeur of Nousherwan was cut into pieces.

Modern Europe would regard this as an act of vandalism but *de gustibus non est disputandum.*

Every age has its own tastes. That sacred and untainted epoch in which 'filthy lucre' was held in unqualified disdain could hardly place any value upon mundane relics.

JALULA* 16 A.H./637 A.D.

THE battle of Jalula gave the *coup de grâce* to the conquest of Iraq. After the fall of Madain the Persians began to make war preparations in Jalula and gathered a large army. Kharzad, brother of Rustam, who was the Commander-in-Chief, displayed great skill in carrying out these preparations. He caused a moat to be excavated around the city and had *gokhrus* (the many pointed thorns of the *pedalium murex*) scattered along the roadsides and

* Jalula is a small town in the neighbourhood of Baghdad and is situated on the road which runs from Baghdad to Khurasan. It is not given in the map as it is very small.

pathways. Saad, on receiving this news, wrote to Omar, who replied that Hashim ibn Utba should be sent on the expedition at the head of twelve thousand troops while the command of the vanguard, the right wing, the left wing, and the rear guard, should be entrusted to Qaaqa, Masur ibn Malik, Amr ibn Malik and Amr ibn Marrah respectively. Hashim, marching from Madain reached Jalula on the fourth day and laid siege to the city. The siege continued for many months. Occasionally the Persians would make a sudden sally and attack the besiegers. In this manner eighty engagements were contested in which the Persians invariably met with reverses. As, however, the city was stored with supplies and provisions of all sorts and their forces numbered hundreds of thousands, they did not lose heart. One day they rushed out recklessly in considerable force. The Musalmans met them in an equal spirit. Now it so happened that all of a sudden a dust storm began to rage with so much violence that heaven and earth were enveloped in total gloom. The Persians were compelled to fall back. Cloud of dust, however, obstructed the vision and thousands of their men fell into the moat and were drowned. Realising this the Persians filled up the moat in several places to enable their men to cross over. The Muslims on being apprised of the fact deemed it a fitting occasion for carrying out their projects and set about carrying the Persian positions by storm.

The Persian intelligence system was as perfect as it possibly could be and they learned every moment what transpired on the opposite side. Forthwith they caused *gokhrus* to be spread in the direction of the advance of the Musalmans and had their forces equipped and arrayed at the gateway of the fort. Both sides fought with a desperation which had not been equalled since the 'Night of Rumbling Noises.' A storm of arrows first darkened the atmosphere and volley upon volley was fired till the sheafs were emptied. The warriors then poised their spears and when these too were broken, out leaped swords from their scabbards and daggers from their sheaths. Qaaqa was performing prodigies of valour and was advancing surely and steadily. By degrees he reached the portcullis but the Commander-in-Chief, Hashim, was far behind and the major part of the army was with him. Qaaqa had it proclaimed through the criers that the Commander-in-Chief was at the portcullis of the fort. On this announcement the troops took Qaaqa for Hashim and all of a sudden fell desperately upon the enemy. The Persians, totally demoralized, fled in all directions in wild disorder, but whithersoever they went *gokhrus* impeded their passage. The Musalmans put them to indiscriminate slaughter till, according to the historian Tabari, a hundred thousand men were slain. The value of the booty secured in the battle was thirty million dirhams.

While communicating the joyfull tidings of the victory Saad despatched a fifth portion of the booty to Medina. Ziyad, the messenger, described the battle with an eloquence which did him immense credit. Omar asked him whether he could recount the events in the same eloquent style before a public assembly. Ziyad replied that if any one could have inspired him with such awe as to make his tongue falter it would have been the Caliph alone. A public assembly was accordingly convened and Ziyad narrated the incidents of the battle with a command of language and burst of eloquence that portrayed the fray in its minutest detail. As he closed his harangue Omar ejaculated: "This is what we call an orator." Ziyad's repartee was:

Golden deeds, so bravely wrought
By Muslim legions proud and 'free',
Feed our tongues with fiery bursts
Of unrestrained fecundity.

Afterwards Ziyad brought forth the booty, but evening had closed in and therefore the distribution was adjourned. The property was stored in the courtyard of the mosque and Abdur Rahman ibn Auf and Abdulla ibn Arqam were posted as sentinels to watch it through the night. In the morning the mantle which covered the goods was drawn aside, and in addition to vast sums in gold and silver coins heaps of precious stones were revealed. Tears ran down the face of Omar as the sight met

his gaze and when the people wonderingly asked him what occasion there was for weeping, he replied: "Where riches appear envy and jealousy are bound to follow in their wake."

When Yezdgird learned the news of the disaster of Jalula he left Hulwan for Rai, placing Khusro Shanum, an officer of renown, with a few squadrons of cavalry in charge of Hulwan. Saad personally stopped at Jalula and despatched Qaaqa at the head of some troops to Hulwan. Qaaqa had marched as far as Qasr-i-Shirin which is situated at a distance of three miles from Hulwan, when Khusro Shanum anticipated him in giving battle. A short and fierce struggle ensued in which Khusro Shanum was routed. Qaaqa then marched to Hulwan where he halted and had peace proclaimed by beat of drum. The neighbouring chieftains came in one after another and accepting the terms of the '*Jizia*' came within the protection of Islam. This victory gave the finishing stroke to the conquests of Iraq because the boundary line of Iraq was marked by Hulwan.

THE CONQUEST OF SYRIA 14 A.H./635 A.D.

WITH a view to tracing the chain of events we deem it expedient to give the earlier accounts of the expedition sent against Syria as briefly as possible. With the opening of the year 13 A.H./634 A.D. the

Caliph Abu Bakr invaded Syria from several directions. Thus Abu Obaida was deputed to reduce Hims; Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan to conquer Damascus, Shur Habil to invade Ardan and Amr ibn al-As to subdue Palestine. The total number of force employed on the expedition was 24,000. On crossing the Arabian frontier these generals at every step met large bodies of Romans who were prepared beforehand to give battle. Moreover, the Emperor of Rome collected all the available forces from the various parts of his vast dominions and sent separate bodies to attack each of the Musalman generals separately. Seeing this the Muslim generals unanimously resolved that the entire force should be concentrated. A letter was at the same time written to Abu Bakr praying him to despatch further reinforcements. Accordingly, Khalid ibn Walid, who had been deputed to conquer Iraq, received an order to start for Syria at once. Khalid marched from Iraq and successfully fighting minor engagements *en route* reached Damascus where he fixed his headquarters. The Roman Emperor despatched a powerful army to oppose the invaders. This army arrived at Ajnadain and set about preparing for an attack. Khalid and Abu Obaida forestalled the Romans and advanced on Ajnadain. At the same time they sent messages to the other generals asking them to march at Ajnadain and meet them there. Accordingly Shur Habil, Yazid and Amr ibn al-As

arrived at Ajnadain at the appointed time. Khalid anticipated the enemy in making attack and, after a sanguinary conflict in which three thousand Muslims were slain, gained complete victory. According to the account of Ibn Ishaq this event took place on the 28th of Jamada I, 13 A.H./634 A.D. After achieving this victory Khalid marched a second time in the direction of Damascus and on arriving there laid siege to the city on all sides. The siege commenced in the time of Abu Bakr but as the city was reduced during the reign of Omar we shall dwell at some length on the event.

THE FALL OF DAMASCUS, 14 A.H./635 A.D.

DAMASCUS was one of the most important centres of Syria and, as during the pre-Islamic epoch Arab tradesmen used to frequent the place, its grandeur and magnificence were the talk of the whole of Arabia. Khalid, therefore, devoted more than usual care in laying siege to it. He posted those generals at the more important gates of the rampart who had been deputed to conquer the several Syrian provinces. Thus Amr ibn al-As was posted at the Tuma gate, Shur Habil at the Faradis gate, Abu Obaida at the Jabia gate while Khalid himself encamped close to the eastern gate at the head of five thousand troops. The rigour of the siege damped the hopes of the Christians, more especially because their spies

who came into the Muslim camp to gather intelligence saw that a spirit of enthusiasm pervaded the entire force—every soldier seemed imbued with dauntless courage and a set purpose, and each individual looked a personification of the manifold virtues of valour : steadfastness, probity, resolution and perseverance. They had, however, this consolation that the Emperor Heracleus was ready to back them up and a relieving force had already started from Hims and was on its way to Damascus. Such was the state of things when Abu Bakr died and Omar succeeded him as Caliph.

The Christians were, moreover, buoyed up by the hope that the rigours of the Syrian cold would be too trying for the Arabs and that ere the approach of winter the adventurers would be forced to march off. Both these hopes, however, were frustrated. Not even the rigours of the Syrian winter could put out the fire of the Muslims' zeal and fervour. Khalid had the foresight to post Zulkila at the head of a body of troops one march from Damascus to intercept any reinforcements that might arrive from that side. The relieving force despatched by the Emperor Heracleus from Hims was thus stopped in the way and never reached its destination. Blank despair now stared the inhabitants of Damascus in the face. In the meantime an event happened which was regarded by the Muslims as a Divine interposition, *i.e.*, a son was born

to the governor of Damascus. The auspicious occasion was celebrated by all the citizens with fetes of joy and they indulged in wine to such excess that before nightfall they were locked in slumber. Khalid was wont to take very little sleep and kept himself well informed of everything that transpired among the besieged. A more fitting opportunity could hardly have presented itself to further his scheme. Instantly he was up and doing, accompanied by a few brave officers. The moat around the rampart was brimful of water. He swam across it with the help of an inflated skin and scaled the wall by means of a lasso and as soon as he attained the parapet he attached one end of a scaling ladder of cords which he had about his person, to the lasso and then flung it down. In a few moments a good many of his comrades were upon the parapet.* Khalid got down the other side and putting the sentinels to sword broke asunder the locks and flung the gates wide open. The Muslim troops were standing ready outside. As soon as the gates flew open they rushed in like a tempestuous torrent and massacred the outlying picket. The Christians, realizing that everything was lost, hastened to open all the gates of the rampart of their own accord and beseeched Abu Obaida to shield them from the terrible Khalid.

* This is the version of Tabari. Balazuri relates that Khalid was apprised of the Christians' fete by a Christian and the ladder was also furnished by him.

In Maqslat, the tinkers' street, Abu Obaida and Khalid met each other. The part of the city conquered by Khalid was reduced in fair fight, but Abu Obaida had accorded peace to the citizens and therefore the conditions of peace were acknowledged as applicable to the conquered part of the city as well, that is to say that no plundering was permitted nor was any person enslaved. This auspicious victory which was the exordium to the conquest of the rest of the Syrian provinces was gained in the month of Rajab, 14 A.H./635 A.D.

FAHL, 14 A.H./635 A.D.

THE fall of Damascus exasperated the Romans beyond measure and they taxed all their energy and resources to concentrate a large and powerful army to confront the Muslims. As, after conquering Damascus, the Musalmans had turned in the direction of Jordan, the Romans began to gather their forces in Baisan, an important town in that province. The forces despatched by the Emperor Heracleus to relieve Damascus, but which could not reach that fated stronghold, also joined those at Baisan. Thus an army of about forty thousand rank and file was got up and was commanded by Siclar, a Roman general.

In order to grasp the topography of the scene of action it is necessary to be acquainted with the

following facts. The Syrian territory is divided into six provinces of which Damascus, Hims, Jordan and Palestine are more important. The chief town of Jordan is Tibriya which is situated at a distance of four stages from Damascus. On the eastern side of Tibriya spreads a lake which is twelve miles long. A few miles from this lake was a small town by the old appellation of Scylla and the newer or Arabic name of Fahl. The battle which forms the subject-matter of this chapter is named after this same town. Fahl as a town is altogether extinct, but some of its ruins are visible even to-day at six hundred feet above the level of the sea. Baisan is situated southwards of Tibriya at a distance of eighteen miles.

In short, the Roman forces were concentrated at Baisan and the Musalmans encamped opposite to them at Fahl. The Romans, fearing lest the Muslims should make a surprise attack, demolished the dams and embankments of all the neighbouring canals and an uninterrupted sheet of water intervened between Fahl and Baisan. Mud and water choked all the roads and pathways, but the torrent of Islam could not be thus curbed. The resolute mien and perseverance of the Muslims forced the Christians to sue for peace and in a message to Abu Obaida they requested him to depute somebody as ambassador to negotiate terms of peace. Abu Obaida nominated Muaz ibn Jabal to the task. As Muaz entered the Roman camp he saw that a cloth of

gold was laid out in the audience canopy of the Roman generalissimo. He made an abrupt halt. A Christian came forward and invited him to enter the canopy offering to hold his horse. The piety and sanctity of Muaz were known even to the Christians. They therefore held him in real esteem and could not brook his standing outside in this manner. Mauz replied that he did not feel inclined to sit on a carpet which had been made with money extorted from the poor. Thus saying he sat down on the ground. The Christians expressed their regret observing that they wanted to honour him, but that they could not help it when he had no sense of self-respect. At this Muaz was enraged. Rising upon his knees he exclaimed: "I care not a little for that which you regard as honour. If it is the wont of slaves to sit on the ground, none can be a greater slave of God than myself." The Romams were astonished at his careless attitude and free-spoken manner and one of them asked him whether there was a greater man than himself among the Muslims. Muaz replied: "Heaven forefend that I should be guilty of such presumption, it is enough for me if I be not the worst of all." The Romans were silenced at this rejoinder. After waiting for a short while, during which neither party broke silence, Mauz asked the interpreter to tell the Romans that if they had nothing to say to him he was going to take his leave. Upon this the Romans said: "We

have to ask you with what object your people have entered this territory. The country of Abyssinia lies in close proximity to you. The king of Persia is dead and the reins of the kingdom are in the hands of a woman. We want to know why you have turned your face in our direction in spite of the fact that our Emperor is the greatest monarch in the world, and we are equal in numbers to the stars of heaven and the atoms of the earth." To this Muaz rejoined: "First of all we request you to embrace the faith of Islam, to say your prayers with faces turned towards our Qibla, to drink not wine and to eat not the flesh of swine. If you do this then we are your brethren. If you do not feel inclined to profess Islam, then pay *Jizia*. But if you do not accept either alternative then there is the sword for you. You have said that your numbers rival the starry host of

'the spacious firmament on high,'

but the inferiority or superiority of numbers is a thing of very little consequence to us. Our God says: 'How often has a small body of men defeated a larger one.' You take pride in acknowledging yourselves to be the subjects of an emperor who can dispose of your lives and property at will; but the one whom we have made our king cannot have precedence over us in any respect. If he committed adultery he would be flogged; if he perpetrated theft his hands would be cut off. He does not hide

himself in the recesses of voluptuous bowers, nor does he think himself greater than we are. In wealth and pelf he is not our superior."

Then the Romans said: "Very well, we cede to you the district of Balqa and that part of Jordan which is contiguous to your lands on the understanding that you leave this country and transfer your ambitions to Persia."

Muaz refused to accept these terms and came away. The Romans wanted to communicate with Abu Obaida direct. With this view they despatched a special ambassador. When he arrived in the Muslim camp Abu Obaida was sitting on the ground examining some arrows. The ambassador had thought that the Muslim Commander-in-Chief would be a person attended with great pomp and magnificence by which he could of course be known; but on whichever side he cast his glance he found all steeped in a uniform colour. Dazed and confused he at last asked certain men who their chief was? They pointed towards Abu Obaida. The ambassador stood amazed and in a tone of wonder he asked Abu Obaida whether he was the chief. Abu Obaida gave him a reply in the affirmative. Upon this the ambassador patronisingly offered a present of two gold *mohars* each to Abu Obaida's men and asked him to leave the country in return for this favour. Abu Obaida refused the offer and the ambassador annoyed at his discomfiture rose to

depart. Abu Obaida guessed his hostile intentions and ordered the troops to get ready for action. He then wrote a letter to Omar giving a detailed account of everything. Omar sent a suitable reply and bade the Musalmans to be of good cheer as God would aid and befriend them.

Abu Obaida had ordered the troops to get ready for action at once, but the Romans did not give battle that day. Next day Khalid rode forth into the battle-field accompanied only by a squadron of cavalry. The Romans too had been busy in making their dispositions. They divided their forces into three bands, which came into the battle-field one after another. The first band was charging at Khalid when at a sign from him Qais ibn Habira issued from the ranks and backed up by a resolute body of warriors rushed forward to stem the tide of the advancing Romans and a desperate and bloody fray ensued. This skirmish had not yet come to an end when another band of the Romans appeared. Khalid now glanced meaningly at Sirat ibn Masruq who galloped off with the men under his command and came to a violent collision with the second band of the Romans. The third division now advanced in great order. Its Commander who was a renowned chieftain led the assault with much skill. Approaching close he ordered a halt and sent one of his captains at the head of a small body of troops to attack Khalid who stood firm against this onset. At

length the Commander personally bore on Khalid and the first two divisions also came in and joined him. The encounter was fierce and lasted a long while. Perceiving the resoluteness of the Muslims, the Romans thought it useless to fight longer and showed signs of beating a retreat. Khalid cried out to his men that the Romans had exhausted their strength and that it was now their turn to take the offensive. At this cry the Musalmans made a sudden and desperate rush and drove back the Romans inch by inch.

The Christians were evading action in the hope of receiving reinforcements. Khalid comprehended their move and told Abu Obaida that their arms had inspired the Romans with a wholesome awe and that now was the proper time for attacking them. Accordingly the criers forthwith announced to the army that the assault was to be made on the morrow and that they should get themselves ready for action. Abu Obaida sprang out of his bed at midnight and began to arrange the troops in battle array. He posted Muaz ibn Jabal to the right and Hashim ibn Utba to the left wing. The command of the infantry was entrusted to Saeed ibn Zaid while Khalid was placed at the head of the cavalry. When the dispositions were complete Abu Obaida marched from one end to the other inspecting the army. He made a halt near each standard and said: "O men! be firm and resolute if you want the help of God,

for God helps those who are firm and resolute."

The Romans, whose strength was fifty thousand rank and file, placed their forces five deep in the following order. In the front rank were horsemen each of whom was strengthened by two archers to his right and two to his left. The right and left flanks were composed entirely of cavalry while the infantry was placed in the rear. In this order, beating drums and playing on tympano, they advanced on the Musalmans. Khalid had to meet the first shock as he was commanding the vanguard. The Roman archers rained a perfect storm of arrows, so that the Musalmans had to fall back. With a dexterous move Khalid avoided the archers and turned towards the right wing which was entirely composed of horsemen without a single archer. The temporary success had so elated the Romans that the right wing squadron detached itself from the main body and charged at Khalid. Khalid suffered himself to be slowly driven back until the squadron left the main body far behind. This was the opportunity which Khalid had cunningly sought for. He made a mighty rush at his opponents and with terrible onslaught devastated the whole ranks. Eleven officers of note were killed at his own hands. In the meantime Qais ibn Habira had attacked and weakened the left wing of the Romans also. The centre was however as strong as ever owing to the archers. Hashim ibn Utba, who commanded the left wing of the Muslim

army, shook his standard and cried out: "By Allah! I will never come back until I have reached that centre and planted this banner in its midst." Thus saying, he jumped down from his horse and, snatching a buckler, fought his way to the Roman centre and approached so close to it that from the whizzing of shafts it came to the clanging of scimitars. The battle raged for a full hour and the field ran red with blood. At last the Romans gave way and fled in the wildest disorder.* Abu Obaida in his despatch to Omar communicated the news of victory and enquired what treatment should be meted out to the conquered people. Omar wrote in reply that the subjects should be treated as tributary and that the arable land should be left as usual in the possession of the original owners.

After this battle the rest of the town and strongholds in the province of Jordan were easily reduced and in the terms of peace it was everywhere stipulated that the lives, goods and chattels, lands, houses, churches and temples of the conquered people would be under protection; only a few sites would be acquired for the erection of mosques.

HIMS, 14 A.H./635 A.D.

HIMS is one of the important districts of Syria, and

* These details of the battle of Fahl are taken from the *Futuh al-Sham* of Azdi. Tabari has described it very briefly and his version also differs in the particulars of the event.

as a town it is of great antiquity. Its English name is Amasia. In ancient times it was greatly noted because of a temple dedicated to the Sun. People came from distant places on pilgrimage to this temple and its votaries prided themselves on the fact. After the fall of Damascus and Jordan three important cities remained to be reduced which meant the subjugation of the whole of Syria. These were Jerusalem, Amasia and Antioch at which last place the emperor Heracleus held his court. Amasia was nearer of approach than the other two cities but was not so well provided with men and stores. The Musalmans therefore made up their mind to reduce it first of all. The town of Balbak on the way was conquered after a slight skirmish. The Romans attempted to oppose the advancing Musalmans near Amasia and issuing in considerable force from the city confronted the Musalmans at Josiah. At the very first onset of Khalid, however, they were routed. Khalid despatched Sirat ibn Masruq at the head of a small body of troops to Amasia. On his way the latter came into collision with many a shattered band of the Roman army which lay scattered about the country, but he defeated them all.

In this battle the Muslim warrior Shur Habil Himyari alone slew seven Roman horsemen and separating himself from the main body proceeded single-handed in the direction of Amasia. As he approached the confines of the city a Roman squadron

seeing the solitary warrior, attacked him. Shur Habil fought with the utmost intrepidity and firmness, and when eleven of his adversaries had received their death wounds at his hands the Romans fled and sought shelter in a church known as the Church of St. Mashal. Shur Habil following in hot pursuit, soon overtook them. There was a large number of persons gathered in the Church. He was now surrounded on all sides and was pelted and stoned to death. Khalid and Abu Obaida followed Sirat ibn Masruq to Amasia and laid siege to the city in right earnest. As the cold was intense the Romans were confident of the inability of the Musalmans to fight long in the open. A messenger from the emperor Heracleus had moreover arrived with the reassuring news that reinforcements were being despatched; and a strong force did leave Jazira in pursuance of the Emperor's orders. But Saad ibn Abi Waqqas, who was in charge of the expedition against Iraq, learned this in time to despatch some troops which intercepted the advance of the relieving column.[*] The people of Amasia, disappointed on all sides, now begged for peace. Abu Obaida left Obada ibn Samit in charge of the place and himself marched on Himat.[†] The citizens of Himat capitulated and submitted to pay *Jizia* as soon as Abu Obaida reached their city. Abu Obaida then left for Shizar and

* *Kamil* of Ibn al-Asir.

† An ancient city situated between Amasia and Qansarin.

from there proceeded towards Mirat al-Noman. The people of these places submitted without opposition. After having done with these the victorious general advanced on Lazqia. This is a very old city. In the time of the Phœnicians it was called Amansa. Abu Obaida halted at some distance from it and had recourse to a new stratagem on observing the strength and impregnability of its fortifications. He caused a large number of pits to be excavated in the field and this was effected with so much secrecy and caution that the enemy were ignorant of it. Then one day all of a sudden he ordered the troops to march off and relinquishing the siege proceeded in the direction of Amasia. The civic garrison to whom long confinement within the walls of the city had proved very irksome and tedious and whose business was all at a standstill considered the disappearance of the besiegers as a godsend. So flinging open the gate of the rampart they once more breathed the fresh air of freedom and busied themselves with their vocations. But the Musalmans had come back and hidden themselves in the pits overnight. No sooner had morning dawned than the Musalmans rushed out of their ambush and in an instant carried the city by storm. After reducing Amasia Abu Obaida resolved to march on the very capital of Heracleus itself and with this view he despatched some troops in advance in that direction. Presently, however, he received a mandate from the Caliph

commanding him to desist from making further advance during that year. In pursuance of this command, therefore, Abu Obaida recalled the troops * and posted officers with deputies at important cities with a view to preventing disorders. Khalid with one thousand troops went to Damascus. Amr ibn al-As took up his quarters in Jordan while Abu Obaida established himself at Amasia.

YARMUK, RAJAB, 15 A.H./636 A.D.

THE Romans on meeting with disaster at Damascus, Amasia and other places, fled to Antioch and bemoaned their lot to Heracleus saying that the Arabs had laid waste the whole of Syria. Heracleus summoned some of the more intelligent and respectable of the fugitives to his court and asked them the reason why they could not stand against the Arabs who were inferior to them in strength, numbers and equipment. On this all of them hung down their heads with shame and not one assayed to make any answer. An experienced old man, however, ventured this remark: "The morals of the Arabs are far superior to those of our people. They pray at night and fast during the day. They injure nobody and meet each other on equal terms. On the other hand we drink wine, indulge in dissolution, fulfil not our promises and oppress the weak. The inevitable

* *Futuh al-Sham* of Azdi, p. 131.

consequence of these diametrically opposite habits is that while all their undertakings are marked by enthusiasm and firmness, all our enterprises are conspicuous by their vacillation and weakness." The Emperor had really made up his mind to leave Syria to its fate but throngs of Christians were continuously pouring in from every town and district with their complaints and grievances. This gave a lively shock to the Emperor's pride and egotism and he formed the definite resolve of bringing all the strength and resources of his empire to bear upon the Arabs once and for all. He accordingly issued commands to the respective administrations of Rome, Constantinople, Jazira and Armenia to despatch all the available troops to the metropolis, Antioch, by a given date. He moreover wrote to all the district officers asking them to send as many men as they could for the coming action. No sooner had these orders reached the heads of the administrations concerned than a torrent of troops rushed in. As far as the eye could reach a perfect flight of military locusts could be seen around Antioch covering the ground far and wide.

The nobility and aristocracy of the places conquered by Abu Obaida had become so deeply attached to him for his just and equitable treatment of them that notwithstanding the difference of faith they had posted their own spies to bring intelligence of the enemy. Thus through their medium Abu

Obaida received the fullest information. He gathered all his officers and in a thrilling speech harangued them thus: "O Musalmans! God has tried you repeatedly and you have invariably come off successful in the test. For this God has always rewarded you with victory. Now your enemy is marching against you in such numbers and in such array that the earth trembles beneath their feet. Tell me what you propose to do now."

Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan, Muawiya's brother, stood up and said: "In my opinion we should leave our womenfolk and children in the city and encamp ourselves outside the walls. Letters should at the same time be written to Khalid and Amr ibn al-As desiring them to hasten from Damascus and Palestine, respectively, to our help."

Shur Habil ibn Hasna put in: "Everybody is free to express his views on this occasion. No doubt Yazid means well, but I differ from his opinion. The residents of the city are all Christians and it is possible that they might capture our families and surrender them to the Emperor Heracleus or kill them.

Abu Obaida observed: "This may be remedied by our expelling the Christians from the city."

Shur Habil rejoined: "O Amir! you have no right to do this. These Christians have capitulated on the condition that they may be allowed to remain in the city tranquilly and peacefully. How can,

therefore, the promise be broken?"

Abu Obaida admitted his error but the matter still remained undecided. The general opinion was that reinforcements should be awaited at Amasia; but Abu Obaida pointed out that no time was left for that. At length it was resolved that they should leave Amasia for Damascus as the presence of Khalid there and the proximity of the Arabian frontier would hold out better prospects. When this was definitely settled, Abu Obaida sent for Habib ibn Maslama, the treasury officer, and spoke to him thus: "The *Jizia* or tribute levied from the Christians is the price of protection which we have stipulated to afford them against the inroads of their enemies. Our own position, however, is so critical at present that we cannot undertake to guard them. You should therefore refund to them the entire amount of money realized from them and tell them that our relations with them remain unchanged but that as we are not in a position to hold ourselves responsible for their safety, the *Jizia* which is nothing but the price of protection is reimbursed to them." Accordingly, the entire sum of many lakhs of dirhams collected from the Christians was refunded to them. This affected the Christians to such a degree that tears trickled down their faces and, one and all, they passionately exclaimed: "May God bring you back to us." The effect on the Jews was still more marked. They cried out with vehemence: "By the Law and

the Prophets, the Emperor shall not take Amasia as long as the spark of life scintillates in our bodies." Thus saying they closed the gates of the city and posted guards and sentinels at all positions of danger.

It was not to the citizens of Amasia alone that Abu Obaida meted out this treatment. He issued orders to the officers in charge of all the various conquered districts directing them to make refunds of all the sums realized on accout of *Jizia.** In short, Abu Obaida left for Damascus† and informed Omar of everything. Omar was plunged in deep grief on hearing that the Musalmans had left Amasia for fear of the Romans but was somewhat consoled when he learned that the decision had been arrived at by a concensus of opinion on the part of the entire army, and observed that, in ordaining that the Musalmans should form such a resolve, God must have had some expediency in view. In his reply to Abu Obaida he said that reinforcements were being despatched under Saeed ibn Amir, and at the same time he gave him to understand that victory and defeat did not depend upon the superiority or inferiority of numbers. On arriving at Damascus, Abu Obaida held a council of war.

Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan, Shur Habil ibn Hasna,

---

* Thesee vents have been described at length by Balazuri in his *Futuh al-Buldan*, p. 137; by Qazi Abu Yusuf in his *Kitab al-Kharaj*, p. 81, and by Azdi in his *Futuh al-Sham*, p. 138.

† These details have been taken from the *Futuh al-Sham* of Azdi. Ibn Wazih, Abbasi and other historians have also described it.

and Muaz ibn Jabal, all expressed different opinions. In the meantime a messenger from Amr ibn al-As arrived with a letter the contents of which showed that general insurrection had become prevalent in the province of Jordan, that the news of the march of the Roman legions had spread consternation and that the departure of the Musalmans from Amasia had detracted a great deal from their prestige. Abu Obaida wrote in reply that the Musalmans had not left Amasia from any fear but that their object in doing so was to draw off the enemy from their fortified positions and to concentrate the scattered forces of Islam at one place. In his letter he also asked Amr not to leave his position as he (Abu Obaida) intended joining and co-operating with him there.

Next day Abu Obaida marched from Damascus and entering the confines of Jordan halted at Yarmuk where Amr ibn al-As also joined him. This place was exactly suited to the military requirements of the Musalmans inasmuch as the Arabian frontier lay in closer proximity to it than at any other spot while an open and uninterrupted field stretched between thus admitting of a retreat if circumstances required it. The reinforcements under the command of Amir despatched by Omar had not yet made their appearance. The march of the Roman army on the other hand and its grand array was being trumpeted forth on all sides which inspired consternation and

anxiety in the minds of the Musalmans. Abu Obaida despatched another fleet courier to Omar with a missive explaining that myriads of Romans had sprung up from land and sea, and that the enthusiasm of the Christians knew no bounds; even hermits and anchorites who had never forsaken their cloisters having joined the army as it passed them. When the letter reached Omar he convened a general meeting of the Muhajirin and the Ansar and read out the letter to them. Tears ran down the faces of the Companions as they learned the contents of the letter and in a passionate tone they exclaimed with one voice: "O Commander of the Faithful! permit us, for the sake of God, to go and offer up our own lives to protect those of our brethren. It will be of no use for us to survive them if harm comes to them which heaven forfend." The enthusiasm of the Companions was gaining greater and greater vehemence till at length Abdur Rahman ibn Auf cried out: "O Commander of the Faithful! place thyself at our head as generalissimo and lead us to the battle-field." The other Companions however differed from this opinion, and it was resolved that fresh reinforcements should be despatched. Omar enquired from the messenger how far the enemy had arrived and he answered that they had come within three or four marches of Yarmuk. Omar was very much grieved on learning this and expressed his regret saying: "Alas! what can be done now. How

can succour reach them in such a short interval?" He then addressed a letter to Abu Obaida couched in the most impressive terms and asked the messenger to read out the letter personally in front of each rank and utter the following verbal message:

"Beware! Omar conveys his salaam to you and says unto you, O people of Islam! That you should meet the opponents properly and attack them like lions and that you should be softer than ants upon yourself, and verily we believe that you will conquer them."

As good luck would have it, the day on which the above messenger reached Abu Obaida, Amir with one thousand troops also arrived at the spot. This timely succour infused fresh spirit and confidence into the souls of the Musalmans and with great firmness they set about preparing for the impending conflict. The Roman army encamped in the Dair al-Jabal (the mountain Hermitage) opposite Yarmuk. Khalid commenced his dispositions forthwith. He placed Muaz ibn Jabal, a distinguished Companion at the head of the right and Qubas ibn Ashim at that of the left wing, while to Hashim ibn Utba he entrusted the command of the infantry. He then made four divisions of the troops under his own command and setting apart one of these for himself made over the charge of the other three to Qais ibn Habira, Maisira ibn Masruq and Amr ibn al-Tufail respectively. These three warriors were the flower of the Arab

chivalry and were called the Chevaliers of Arabia. The Romans appeared in the grandest array. Their forces numbered above two hundred thousand rank and file placed twenty-four deep, in front of each of which their religious mentors walked to and fro displaying crucifixes and exhorting their men to fight. When the two hosts approached sufficiently close to each other, a Roman knight issued from his ranks and challenged any of the Muslim warriors, who felt so disposed, to single combat. Maisira ibn Masruq moved forward but as the Roman was a giant with a superb physique who gave evidence of Herculean strength, Khalid interrupted Masruq and glanced at Qais ibn Habira who advanced forward giving utterance to the following verses:

Go, ask of damsels fair,
Amidst their secret bowers,
Am I not one who towers?
In battle everywhere
'Bore dauntless warriors, high,
When all in all am I.

Qais darted at his adversary with lightning rapidity and ere the Roman knight could even grasp his weapons, he had dealt him a tremendous blow on the head with his scimitar. The steel helmet was cleft and the Roman's skull cut in twain, the blade reaching the neck. The Roman staggered and fell from his horse. The Musalmans rent the air with shouts of *Allah Akbar* simultaneously. "The

omen is favourable," observed Khalid "and presages victory if so be the Will of God." The Christians had posted separate bodies of troops to fight the three captains of Khalid. Each of them, however, was beaten and the battle was adjourned at this stage.

Bahan assembled his captains at night and told them that the riches and luxuries of Syria had allured the Saracens too much to make them forsake the same easily. "It would, therefore, be politic," he observed, "to appeal to their sense of greed and send them away by making a present of money." All present fell in with his view. Next day Bahan sent a messenger to Abu Obaida requesting him to depute a trustworthy and respectable officer to make negotiations for peace. Abu Obaida nominated Khalid. The Christian messenger was named George. When he reached the Muslim camp evening had set in. A short while afterwards the evening prayers commenced. The eagerness and ardour displayed by the Musalmans in calling the *Takbir* and the deep humility and respect, oblivious of everything around, and engrossed in the meditation of God, they said their prayers, were marked by the messenger with the utmost wonder and astonishment. At length when the prayers were over he put certain queries to Abu Obaida one of which was: "What do you think of Christ?" Abu Obaida recited the following verses from the Quran:

" O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion; nor say of Allah aught but truth; verily, Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, was a Prophet of Allah and His Word, He inspired it unto Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him. (IV : 171)

" Christ disdaineth not to serve and worship Allah, nor do the angels near (God)." (IV : 172)

When the interpreter translated these words, George cried out impulsively: " Undoubtedly Jesus is such, and unquestionably your Prophet is true." Thus saying he uttered the fundamental formula of the Islamic faith comprising the unity of God and embraced Islam. He had no mind even to return to his people, but Abu Obaida, being apprehensive that the Romans might suspect the Musalmans of treachery, compelled him to return, giving him at the same time to understand that he might come back with the Musalman ambassador who was to visit their camp on the morrow.

Next day Khalid proceeded to the Roman encampment. The Romans, with a view to setting-off their glory and grandeur to advantage, had arrayed rows of horsemen in burnished panoply on both sides of the road for a long distance. Khalid however regarded them with an air of supreme contempt and passed through them much in the same way as a lion passes through a herd of sheep. When he approached the tent of Bahan, the latter received him with the utmost deference and seated him by his own side.

Conversation then commenced through the medium of an interpreter. After the interchange of the usual civilities Bahan began his discourse in a pompous and verbose style. He waxed eloquent on the praise of Jesus Christ at first and then began to speak of the Emperor Heracleus and observed with pride that their king was the king of kings. The interpreter had not yet conveyed the full sense of these words when Khalid interrupted Bahan cutting him short by the remark: "I have nothing to say of your king but if he whom we have made our chief were, for a moment, to indulge in thoughts of his greatness as a king we would instantly depose him." Bahan then resumed the thread of his interrupted speech and dwelling at great length in terms of glowing pride upon the grandeur and wealth of his nation said: "O people of Arabia! we have always treated as friends such of your countrymen as migrated to and took up their abode in our country. We considered that the whole of Arabia would gratefully acknowledge the favours and boons which we heaped upon their fellow countrymen, but contrary to our expectations you have made inroads into our territory and desire to turn us out of it. Perhaps you are not aware that many nations have entertained similar projects over and over again without however meeting with success. Now you, than whom no people on the surface of the earth were more ignorant, more barbaric and more unequipped, run away with

the same lofty notion. This is downright presumption but nevertheless we overlook it; nay, if you march off from this place in peace we shall make your Commander-in-Chief a present of ten thousand dinars, the other officers a thousand each and the soldiery one hundred apiece."

When Bahan concluded his speech Khalid rose to reply and, after glorifying God and praising the Prophet, said: "Decidedly you are wealthy and rich and a ruling nation. We are also aware of your munificent treatment of the neighbouring Arabs but it can hardly be acknowledged as a favour. It was only a stratagem to which you had recourse with a view to propagating your religion and the consequence is that proselytized as Christians our own kinsfolk are to-day arrayed on your side to battle with us. We do not deny that we were extremely poor and impecunious and were no better than a horde of wandering nomads. Our vandalism and ignorance had attained such a climax that the strong crushed the weak, mutual dissension and strife and war thinned our numbers till whole clans were annihilated. We adored a number of gods, we manufactured idols with our own hands and bowed down before them. But God Almighty showered the blessings of His mercy on us. He sent us a Prophet who was from among ourselves and who was the most noble, the most magnanimous and the most virtuous of us all. He taught us unity of belief and gave us to

understand that God has no rival, that He has no wife and offspring and that there is no god but One. He also commanded us to submit these doctrines to the whole world. Whosoever accepts them, becomes a Muslim and a member of our fraternity. Those who do not accept them but agree to pay the *Jizia*, we offer to guard and protect. Those whom neither alternative suits have to face the sword."

At the mention of the *Jizia* Bahan heaved a deep-drawn sigh and pointing to his legionaries said: "They will not submit to the *Jizia* even in their dying hours. We do not give *Jizia* but take it." Thus nothing was settled and Khalid came away. Preparations were then set on foot for that fatal conflict after which the Romans could rise no more. After Khalid had gone away, Bahan assembled his Captains and exhorted them thus: "Do you hear what the Arabs say? They have the presumption to assert that you cannot be safe from their inroads unless you become their subjects. Say, do you agree to suffer yourselves to be enslaved by them?" All the officers present replied with great enthusiasm that they would die a thousand times rather than suffer such an indignity.

When the day dawned the Romans advanced with such vehement ardour and in such terrible array that even the Musalmans were surprised. Khalid, on observing this, arrayed his troops in an order

different from the one usually in vogue in Arabia. He divided the forces which numbered from thirty to thirty-five thousand rank and file into thirty-six separate bodies and arranged them one behind another in similar number of ranks. He gave the command of the centre to Abu Obaida, that of the right wing to Amr ibn al-As and Shur Habil, that of the left wing to Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan. Other officers on whom the command of the rest of the corps devolved were men who in valour and martial skill were second to none in the country. Orators whose eloquence was known to stir the hearts of the people, were entrusted with the task of working up the soldiers to a pitch of fervour and enthusiasm by means of their rhetorical and impressive harangues. Of these Abu Sufyan was one who walked to and fro in front of the ranks giving utterance to the following words:

"By God, you are the support and helpers of Islam and they are the support of Rum and the enemies of God. O God! this is one of Thy days, help Thy servants."

The following were the words of Amr ibn al-As:

"Comrades mine! turn your eyes downwards, couch your lances and stand firm to your positions. When the enemy attack you suffer them to advance till they have approached close to your lances' points. Then make a dash forward and bear them down like so many lions."

Numerically the forces were small, that is to say they numbered not more than thirty or thirty-five thousand men, but they were the very cream of the Arab manhood. Of these one thousand were those who had lived in the time of the Prophet and one hundred were those who had followed the Prophet in the battle of Badr. Of the famous tribes of Arabia that of the Azd alone was represented by more than ten thousand warriors. The Hamir were represented by a larger body of fighting men and the clans of Hamdan, Kholan, Lakhm and Jazam, etc., headed by their renowned chieftains, made no mean contributions to the small but select army. This battle is also characterized by the participation in it of women who fought with the utmost bravery side by side with the men. Hinda, the mother of Amir Muawiya, made repeated onslaughts with the cry of "Help Ghatafan with your swords" on her lips. Juwairya, sister of Amir Muawiya, also fought with the greatest valour and heroism.

Miqdad, who was gifted with a melodious voice, recited in front of the ranks, verses from the Quranic chapter on Booty in which the true believers have been exhorted to fight in the way of Allah.

The Romans on the other hand were in a ferment of ardour and enthusiasm. Thirty thousand Roman soldiers fettered themselves so as to bar all idea of retreat. The Romans led the assault. Two hundred thousand fighting men advanced with one

accord. Thousands of priests and bishops moved in front, each holding a crucifix in his hand and invoking the aid of Jesus Christ. A person, on seeing this mighty and vast array, mechanically cried out: "Great God! What an infinite army!" Khalid cut him short with the stern rebuke: "Keep silence—by Allah, if only my horse's hoofs were a little harder, I would have said that the Christians were at liberty to add as many troops more to their army."

In short, the Christians made a desperate rush firing volleys of arrows as they advanced. The Muslims stood firm for a long while but the charge was so furious that their right wing broke off from the main body and fell back in great disorder. The routed division retreated as far as the encampment of the harem. This enraged the women beyond measure. Pulling off the poles of their tents these Amazonian heroines brandished them lustily and cried out: "Stand back ye cowards! Come a pace nearer and we shall crack your skulls with these poles." Khawla, the sister of Zirar, was appealing to the men's sense of honour by repeating this verse:

Fliest thou recreant! from virgins pure,
From flying arrows shalt thou death endure.

At this juncture Muaz ibn Jabal who commanded a section of the right wing jumped off his horse saying that he was going to fight on foot but that he offered his steed to any warrior who could prove

himself worthy of it. His son who was close by accepted the offer observing that he could fight better on horseback. Both father and son then dashed forward and fought so valiantly that the retreating Muslims presently rallied with redoubled energy and courage. At the same time Hajjaj, the chieftain of the Zubaid clan, came to the rescue at the head of five hundred warriors and intercepted the Christians who were pursuing the Musalmans. In the right wing the Azd clansmen had stood firm ever since the commencement of the assault. They had to bear the brunt of the action but they stood immovable as the wall of a solid rock. The battle was raging with indescribable fury and violence. The work of carnage was going on with such gruesome intensity that mutilated heads and hands and shoulders were thickly strewing the battle-field on all sides; but the Azds still remained unshaken. Amr ibn al-Tufail, the chieftain of the clan, was continuously hewing and hacking at his adversaries with his sword and at each blow cried out: "Beware clansmen of Azd! lest on your account should the reputation of the Musalmans suffer." Nine cavaliers of note were killed at his hands but at last he himself was slain.

Khalid had posted his men in the rear and was waiting for an opportunity. All of a sudden he burst from behind and made a tremendous rush bearing everything down before him in his irresistible career.

Whole ranks of the Romans wavered and gave way before this terrible shock. Ikrama, the son of Abu Jehl, who, prior to embracing Islam, had often fought on the side of the idolaters, pressed his steed forward and addressed his Roman opponents thus: "O Christians! Learn that there was a time (when I was an idolater) when I fought the Prophet himself; surely I cannot remain in the background when the fighting is against you." Thus saying he turned towards his companions-in-arms and asked: "Who takes the vow of fealty unto death?" Four hundred persons, of whom Zirar ibn Azdar was one, took this grim vow and fought so resolutely and firmly that nearly all of them were slain on the spot. The dead body of the noble Ikrama was found amidst the heap of the slain. He was gasping for the last breath when he was discovered. Khalid placed his head on his lap and, pouring some water down his throat, exclaimed: "By Allah, Omar was wrong in saying that we would not die martyrs."*

Although Ikrama and his comrades were themselves killed, they sold their lives dearly and made thousands of the Romans bite the dust. The onslaughts of Khalid weakened their strength still further till at last they had to fall back. Khalid drove them back with a sure and steady pressure until he reached Darinjar the Roman Commander-

* *Tabari*: the Battle of Yarmuk.

in-Chief. Darinjar and his staff covered their eyes with their handkerchiefs saying that if it were not in store for them to see victory would that they did not at least witness defeat.

Just at the moment when this sanguinary encounter was at its full swing in the right wing, Ibn Qanatir* attacked the left wing. Unfortunately most of the men of the corps were the clansmen of Lakhm and Ghassan who had taken up their abode in the confines of Syria and had for long been under the sway of Rome. The awe with which the Imperialism of Rome had inspired them produced this effect that at the very first onset of the Romans they broke and fled and if the officers had not shown more valour, all would have been lost. The Romans in their pursuit of the fugitives reached the tents of the women who, on realising the danger rushed out of their tents and their courage and firmness stemmed the tide of the advancing Christians. Although the troops were thrown into disorder, still the officers and particularly Qubas ibn Ashim, Saeed ibn Zaid, Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan, Amr ibn al-As and Shur Habil among them were performing prodigies of valour. Swords and lances were breaking continually under the vigorous arm of Qubas who overtaxed the temper of the weapons by plying them incessantly, but this did not concern him the least.

* The commander of the right wing of the Romans.

When a lance broke under his giant strokes he would cry out: "Lend someone of you a weapon to him who has promised God not to turn his back on the battle-field while life sustains him." The men instantly furnished him with a scimitar or lance and he rushed upon the enemy once more with the impetuous daring of a lion. Abu al-Aur jumped down from his steed and said to the men under his command: "Firmness and fortitude crown you with laurels of honour and fame in this world and with Divine grace hereafter. See that you do not lose these blessings." Saeed ibn Zaid was kneeling upon the ground gnashing his teeth in rage. As the Romans came towards him he dashed forward with overwhelming precipitancy and at a single well-aimed blow placed the officer commanding the vanguard *hors de combat*. Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan, the brother of Muawiya, was fighting with the greatest firmness and valour. His father Abu Sufyan, who was exhorting the men with his persuasive eloquence to the performance of heroic deeds, happened to pass by and seeing his son addressed him in these terms: "Beloved son! each of thy soldiers is at this moment showing feats of skill and valour; thou art their commander and it behoves thee to excel them as such in courage and daring. Thou wouldst be put to shame if any of thy soldiers were to beat thee in the race of valour on this field." Shur Habil was in his proper element at this moment. The Romans were

surrounding him on all sides and he was standing in their midst like a rock. The Quranic verse—"Verily God has purchased from the (true) believers their lives and their property in return for paradise; they do battle in the name of God, slaying the enemy and being slain themselves"—was on his lips and ever and anon he uttered the cry: "Where are those who would strike a bargain with God and become His neighbours." Everyone who heard this cry turned back, as it were, mechanically, until the routed troops rallied round him. Shur Habil put himself at their head and fought with such vigour and bravery that the Romans, who were pressing the Musalmans hard, were checked in their onward career.

The women on the other hand came out of their tents and posting themselves at the rear of the troops cried out to them: "Do not look on our faces if you turn your backs upon the battle-field."

The battle so far was equally balanced, the Romans even having slightly the better of the conflict. At this stage Qais ibn Habira, whom Khalid had posted at the head of a regiment in the rear of the left wing, suddenly rushed from behind. Such was the intensity of the shock which his charge imparted to the Romans that the greatest efforts of their officers could not keep the men from being thrown into the wildest confusion. All ranks broke and fell back pell-mell. Saeed ibn Zaid, issuing from the centre, made a simultaneous attack. This

resulted in the Romans being given the *coup de grâce.* They were driven back for a great distance until they came to the brink of a stream which edged the battle ground. In a short while their dead bodies choked up this rivulet and the Musalmans were left undisputed masters of the field.

An event occurred in this battle which is memorable on account of its ghastly interest. While the conflict was raging at its hottest Habash ibn Qais, a noted warrior, was fighting most bravely in the thickest part. Someone struck him a blow with a scimitar on one of his feet which was severed clean away, but Habash remained unconscious of the fact. A short while afterwards when sensation asserted itself he perceived the sad deficiency and was seen looking about and enquiring from those around what had become of his foot. His clansmen always prided themselves on this fact. Siwar ibn Ofa, a poet, exclaimed:

> The son of Attab comes of us,
> And of us cometh straight
> The "seeker of his foot," and he
> Who made his clansmen great.*

Opinion is divided as to the extent of the casualties on the side of the Romans. Tabari and Azdi give the number as over one hundred thousand while Balazuri puts the figure at seventy thousand.

* *Futuh al-Buldan*, p. 131.

On the side of the Musalmans three thousand persons were killed including Zirar ibn Azdar, Hisham ibn al-Asi, Ayan, Saeed and others. Heracleus was in Antioch when the news of the terrible disaster reached him. Forthwith he prepared to repair to Constantinople. As he took his departure he turned about and exclaimed: "Farewell O Syria!"

Abu Obaida communicated the tidings of the victory to Omar and at the same time despatched a small embassy which ranked Hozifa ibn al-Yaman among its members. Omar had not slept for many days anxiously awaiting the news from Yarmuk. As he heard of the victory he instantly prostrated himself and fervently offered thanksgiving to God.

From Yarmuk Abu Obaida marched back to Hims and despatched Khalid to Qansarin. The citizens opposed Khalid at first but, shut up within their walls, they were forced to capitulate on the terms of the *Jizia*. The Tanukhs, an Arab tribe, had long been settled here. For a considerable time these tribesmen had dwelt under canvas but civilization asserted its own by degrees and they raised grand and magnificent edifices. Abu Obaida, impelled by national fellow-feeling, persuaded them to embrace the Islamic faith and all turned Musalmans. The clan of Banu Salih alone persisted in Christianity but after a short time they too embraced Islam. A considerable number of the people of the clan of Tai were also residing here and they adopted Islam

of their own free will.

After subduing Qansarin Abu Obaida proceeded towards Aleppo. In the open plane outside the city many Arab clans were settled. They capitulated agreeing to pay the *Jizia* and after a few days all became converts to Islam. The citizens of Aleppo, being apprised of the approach of Abu Obaida, shut themselves up in their citadel. Ayaz ibn Ghanam, the Commander of the vanguard, laid siege to the city which, however, surrendered a few days afterwards on the usual terms of the *Jizia*. The fall of Aleppo was the signal for the march upon Antioch. This being the capital of the emperor, large numbers of Romans and other Christians had flocked towards it as the centre of refuge. Abu Obaida beleaguered the city on all sides and after the siege had lasted a few days they were forced to capitulate. The subjugation of these important places inspired terror in the whole of Syria. So wholesome was the effect of this awe that whenever an officer at the head of a small body of men scoured the country in any direction, the Christians waited upon him of their own accord and sued for peace. So, after reducing Antioch, Abu Obaida spread his forces in all directions. The small towns of Buqa, Joma, Surmin, Tozi, Qoras, Tilghraz, Daluk and Raban were captured so easily that not a drop of blood was shed. Similarly Balis and Qasrin were taken in the very first attempt. The Jarjomites refused to pay the *Jizia* saying that

they would fight side by side with the Musalmans against the enemy. As the *Jizia* was nothing but the recompense for military service their request was granted.

Baghras was a town situated in the neighbourhood of Antioch contiguous to the frontier of Asia Minor. Many of the Arab clansmen such as the Ghassans, the Tanukhs and the Ayads were preparing at this place to accompany the Romans to the Emperor Heracleus. Habib ibn Maslama attacked them and a fierce conflict took place in which thousands were killed. In the meantime Khalid attacked Marash which capitulated on the condition that the Christians should evacuate the city.

JERUSALEM, 16 A.H./637 A.D.

IT has already been mentioned that in sending out the expedition against Syria Abu Bakr deputed separate generals to reduce the various provinces of that country. Thus the province of Palestine fell to the lot of Amr ibn al-As. Amr had reduced some of the towns even in Abu Bakr's time and the important cities of Nablas, Lud, Amwas, and Bait-Jarin had been captured by the time of Omar. Whenever any general conflict took place Amr hastened from Palestine to co-operate with Abu Obaida but as soon as it was over he returned to his own seat and took up the work entrusted to his special

care.* Having reduced the neighbouring towns he at last invested the holy city of Jerusalem itself. The Chirstians continued defending themselves while shut up within their fortifications. By this time Abu Obaida had completed the reduction of the furthermost districts of Syria such as Qansarin etc. Having settled everything to his satisfaction in that part of the country he proceeded in the direction of Jerusalem. The Christians loosing heart sued for peace and for better satisfaction laid it down as one of the conditions that Omar should come to Jerusalem in person and subscribe to the treaty of peace with his own hand. Abu Obaida in his despatch to Omar described all this saying that the fall of Jerusalem depended upon his arrival. Omar assembled all the distinguished companions and consulted them. Osman declared that the Christians had been struck with terror and lost heart and that if the Caliph were to reject their request they would be still more humiliated, and considering that the Musalmans regarded them with utter contempt, would lay down their arms unconditionally. Ali, however, dissented from the view and gave the contrary opinion. Omar shared the same opinion and commenced preparations for the journey. Appointing Ali† as his deputy he entrusted the duties of

* *Futuh al-Buldan*, p. 140.

† This is Tabari's statement. Yaqubi mentions Osman's name instead of Ali's.

the Caliphate to him and left Medina in the month of Rajab, 16 A.H.*

Our readers will be anxious to know the details of the pomp and splendour which might well be supposed to have characterized the march of Omar the great—the march which was calculated to inspire the enemies of Islam with an idea of its grandeur and might. But they are destined to disappointment on this score. No bands played, no gaudy trains and brilliant equipages moved, no imposing grenadiers and stately dragoons marched to announce the journey of the Great Caliph. No, not even an ordinary tent was provided for his accommodation. His sole retinue consisted of a horse which he bestrode and a few Muhajirin and Ansar, who accompained him. Still, wherever it was known that Omar the Great was marching from Medina to Syria everything fairly trembled with awe.

The Muslim generals had been advised to meet the Caliph at Jabia. So, Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan, Khalid ibn Walid and others came and received him at this place. Long residence in Syria had robbed these officers of their Arabian simplicity. When they arrived in the presence of Omar he saw them arrayed in silk from the richest looms and their brilliant dresses and imposing appearances gave them the look of the Persians. Omar flew into a fit of

* *Yaqubi*, p. 167.

rage at the sight. Down he jumped off his horse and picking up a few pebbles that lay scattered about the ground he pelted them saying: "So soon have you fallen into Persian habits."

The officers replied that they had cuirasses beneath the silken tunics, implying that they had not lost the art of war and that their warlike spirit was as keen as ever. On hearing this the Caliph was appeased and said that if such was the case then there was no real harm done.* Approaching close to the city Omar got up on a hillock, and looked all around. The charming fields of Ghota with their verdure laden expense stretched and the stately and towering edifices of Damascus loomed in front of him. He was strangely moved and in a tone of deep pathos repeated the following verse from the Quran: "They have left many a garden, fountain, park, arbour and riches which they used to enjoy. Thus it is that We put a later generation in possession thereof."

He then recited a few heart-rending couplets of the poet Nabigha.

Omar sojourned for a long while at Jabia and the treaty of Jerusalem was drawn up there. The Christians of Jerusalem had already been informed of the journey of Omar and some of the nobles of that city proceeded to Damascus to see him. Omar

' *Tabari*, p. 2402.

was seated in the midst of the Muslim troops when suddenly a cloud of dust arose in the distance and a number of horsemen appeared at full gallop with swords glittering at their sides. The Musalmans, startled at the appearance, instinctively felt for their weapons. When Omar enquired the cause of the alarm they pointed towards the dashing cavalry. Quick of apprehension Omar guessed that the approaching horsemen were the Christians of Jerusalem and he accordingly reassured his men saying that they need not be alarmed as the strangers only came to sue for peace. In short the treaty of peace was drawn up and the elite of the Companions subscribed to it.*

After the ratification of the treaty Omar proceeded to Jerusalem. The hoofs of the horse which he rode were worn to tenderness and the animal limped painfully. Omar dismounted on seeing its sorry condition. His men brought him a fine courser of Turkish breed. The animal was high-mettled and fiery. As Omar mounted it, it began to prance on which he cried out: "Miserable thing! whence this vain and haughty amble?" Thus saying he alighted and pursued his way on foot. As he entered the environs of Jerusalem, Abu Obaida and other officers of the army came forth to bid him welcome. The

* This is Tabari's statement. Balazuri and Azdi on the other hand say that the treaty of peace was drawn up at Jerusalem. We have produced the covenant in its entire detail in the second part of this book.

poorness of Omar's shabby attire and the tattered condition of his scrubby equipage put the Muslims to shame and their sense of self-respect received a shock when the galling idea crossed their minds as to what the Christians would think of them on beholding their chief. So they brought for his use a gallant Turkish charger and a handsome dress of valuable materials. Omar, however, rejected the offer saying that the honour which God had conferred upon him was that of Islam and that that was enough for him. In short he entered Jerusalem in the same humble guise. First of all he repaired to the Mosque and approaching the arch of David he recited the verse from the Quran which speaks of the Apostle David as bowing down to God and then prostrated himself in humble obeisance. He then visited the church of the Christians and walked about the building for some time.

As a large number of military officers and provincial governors had gathered there Omar prolonged his sojourn in the holy city for many days and issued various necessary orders. One day Bilal, the Prophet's *Muazzin*, complained to the Commander of the Faithful that the officers treated themselves to such dainties as fowl's meat and white loaves while the men could not get even ordinary food. Omar glanced inquisitively at the officers who replied that edibles of all varieties were cheap in that country and that white loaves and fowls' meat cost

the same there as brown loaves and dates in Hijaz. Omar could not compel the officers to partake of a more frugal fare but he issued an order to the effect that in addition to their pay and their legitimate share of the war spoils the soldiers should also get free rations.

One day, at the time of prayers, Omar requested Bilal to say the *Azan*. Bilal rejoined that he had made up his mind never to say the *Azan* for any one after the Prophet, but that he would make an exception in his favour and obey him for that only once. So when in his well-known stentorian accents he began to summon the faithful to prayers, association wafted along the retrospective stream of memory, painfully reminded the Companions, one and all, of the blessed times of the Prophet and melted their hearts to tears. Abu Obaida and Muaz ibn Jabal wept most disconsolately while Omar fell into a fit of unbroken sobs. It was some time before this scene of deep emotion and pathos abated in its vehemence.

During his stay at Jerusalem Omar once visited the Mosque of Aqsa and sending for Kaab the Bishop asked him where to say the prayers. There lies a stone in this fane which the ancient prophets have left as a relic. It is called *Sakhrah* and the Jews hold it in the same veneration as the Musalmans do the *Hajar Aswad* (the Balck Stone). When Omar enquired from Kaab the direction in which the

prayers were to be offered, the latter pointed out *Sakhrah* as the *Qiblah*. On this Omar told him that the Jewish faith had still a hold over his mind which had led him, instinctively, as it were, to put off his shoes near *Sakhrah*. This event shows in what light Omar regarded such ancient monuments.

SECOND ATTEMPT OF THE CHRISTIANS TO REGAIN AMASIA, 17 A.H./638 A.D.

THE second battle of Amasia is memorable because it led to the conquest of Jazira and Armenia. We have already set forth the causes which operated in behalf of the expeditions against Persia and Rome but no *casus belli* had hitherto presented itself to justify the despatch of an armed force against Armenia. The sphere of the conquest of Islam was rapidly widening and Islamic dominions were continually expanding. The neighbouring kingdoms were simultaneously struck with fear as they grimly felt that the onward and irresistible march of the forces of Islam was one day calculated to merge their individualities in its overwhelming and absorbing entity. Accordingly the people of Jazira prevailed upon the Emperor to make one more effort to recover what he had lost giving him at the same time to understand that they were ready to co-operate with him. Heracleus hailed the opportunity and despatched a large force to Amasia. The people

of Jazira on the other hand made a simultaneous advance in the direction of Syria, with an army numbering thirty thousand. Abu Obaida, on the side of the Musalmans, was not slow in rising to the occasion. He gathered all the available troops and arrayed them outside the walls of Amasia sending information, at the same time, to Omar of all that had transpired. Omar had had the foresight to establish military cantonments in eight large cities, and at each of these four thousand horses stood ready saddled day and night to meet any emergency that might arise and to enable the troops on all sides to rush to the seat of danger at the first call. No sooner had Abu Obaida's letter reached him than Omar despatched fleet couriers in all directions. He wrote to Qaaqa ibn Omar who was stationed at Kufa, directing him to hasten with four thousand cavalry to Amasia; Suhail ibn Adi was ordered to fly to Jazira and cut the march of the Jazirites to Amasia; Abdulla ibn Otban was sent to Nasibain and Walid ibn Oqba deputed to repair to Jazira and prevent those Arab clans who had settled at Jazira from joining hands with the enemy. Not content with even these arrangements Omar personally repaired from Medina to Damascus. The Jazirites on learning that the Musalmans had invaded their territory, raised the siege of Amasia and marched back to Jazira. The Arab clans, too, who had come to aid the Christians repented the step they

had taken and secretly sent word to Khalid telling him that they were quite willing to secede from the Christians immediately or just at the dénouement according as he chose. Khalid told them in reply that it was a pity he was under another man (Abu Obaida) who did not choose to take the offensive, else he would not have cared much for their secession or alliance. Still, he added, if they were true, they should do well to leave their allies and depart in any direction. The Muslim troops on the other hand, were impatient for action and insisted upon being permitted by Abu Obaida to attack the Christians. Abu Obaida consulted Khalid who replied that the Christians always fought on the strength of superior numbers and that as they were denied even that consolation just then, there was no cause for apprehension in giving them battle. Abu Obaida, however, still hesitated. He mustered all the troops and harangued them in these forcible and stirring terms: " O Musalmans! know that if he who proves himself firm and resolute happens to survive the day, territorial possessions and riches will be his share, while if he is slain he will enter the kingdom of heaven. I bear witness to the fact, and it is no occasion for telling falsehood, that the Prophet of God (peace be upon him) has said that he who dies but does not die without belief in God will certainly enter paradise." The troops were already restless for action. Abu Obaida's harangue added fuel to the

fire and all clutched at their weapons forthwith. Abu Obaida, heading the centre column and Khalid and Abbas commanding the right and left wings respectively, simultaneously advanced to attack. Qaaqa who, with a flying column of four thousand, had hastened from Kufa to reinforce the Musalman army, was a few miles from Amasia when he heard of this event. Instantly, picking up a hundred of his best horsemen, he left the main body and dashed up to the scene of action. No sooner had the Muslims made the attack than the Arab clans, as already agreed upon with Khalid, fell back in disorder. Their retreat weakened the strength of the Christians who fought for a little while and then took to flight. Their rout was so complete that they did not stop until they gained Marj al-Dibaj. This was the last battle which originated on the side of the Christians and after which they never had the courage to assume the offensive.

THE DEPOSITION OF KHALID

THE deposition of Khalid constitutes an important incident in the course of events relating to the conquest of Syria in 17 A.H./638 A.D. Musalman historians generally aver that the first mandate with which the Caliphate of Omar opened was to depose Khalid. Ibn al-Asir and others have, all of them, made the same statement. This is a gross

error, however, on their part. It is a matter for regret that Ibn al-Asir has even failed to perceive the anachronism which he has himself perpetrated. He speaks of the deposition of Khalid in the year 13 A.H. at one place, while at another he devotes a separate heading to Khalid's deposition under the events of the year 17 A.H., and at both of these places he enumerates similar circumstances.

The fact is that certain excesses of Khalid had long displeased Omar. Still, in the beginning of his Caliphate, Omar did not choose to take him to task for the same. As Khalid was not in the habit of submitting accounts to the Caliph, he was asked to be more careful in rendering accounts in future. Khalid wrote to say in reply that ever since the time of Abu Bakr he had been following the same procedure and that he could not do otherwise now. It was impossible for Omar to tolerate this independence and he could not possibly have surrendered the public funds to any one to be squandered indiscriminately. He accordingly wrote back to Khalid that he would be suffered to continue in his post as Generalissimo only on the condition that he regularly submitted the accounts of the army expenditure. Khalid did not accept this condition and consequently he was deposed. Hafiz Ibn Hajar has described this event at length in his account of Khalid in the *Kitab al-Isabah.* Still Khalid was not entirely set aside but reduced to a junior command

under Abu Obaida.

Later on in the year 17 A.H./638 A.D. the following incident took place. Khalid made a grant of ten thousand dirhams to a poet. The functionaries of the Secret Intelligence Department (an institution organised and brought to perfection during the Caliphate of Omar) forthwith informed Omar of the matter. Omar addressed a letter to Abu Obaida saying that if Khalid had made the present in question out of his own purse he was guilty of extravagance and if he had given it away from the public treasury he committed the offence of criminal breach of trust and in either case he deserved to be deposed.

The manner of Khalid's deposition is worth mentioning. The messenger entrusted with the writ of deposition questioned Khalid, in a public assembly, as to the source from which he had met the grant. Omar's orders were that Khalid should be forgiven if he only admitted his offence, but Khalid was not willing to stoop to the indignity of a confession. The messenger was, therefore, compelled, as a mark of deposition, to take off Khalid's turban from his head, and, as a punishment for his defiant attitude he bound his neck with the same turban. One is taken by surprise on finding that a mighty general who had no equal in the whole of the Islamic world and whose redoubtable sword had sealed the fate of Iraq and Syria was thus made to drink the cup of humiliation to the dregs but suffered not a murmur to escape his

lips. The event, however, shows Khalid's candour and love of truth on the one hand and Omar's might and grandeur on the other.

On reaching Amasia Khalid made a speech regarding his deposition in the course of which he observed that Omar the Commander of the Faithful appointed him Chief of Syria but dismissed him when he had conquered the whole of that country. On this a soldier got up and said: "Hold thy tongue O Chief! Such words might engender sedition."

"Yes," rejoined Khalid, "but sedition cannot grow while Omar lives." *

Khalid came to Medina and waited on Omar. "O Omar!" said he "by Allah you do me injustice."

"How did you manage to amass so much wealth?" asked Omar.

"From the spoils of war," replied Khalid.

He then added that he was willing to make over to the Caliph any sum over and above the amount of sixty thousand dirhams which might be found in his possession. Calculations were accordingly made and the surplus which amounted to 20,000 dirhams was remitted to the public treasury.

"Khalid!" said Omar to the ex-Commander-in-Chief, "by Allah I love you and honour you at the same time." Thus saying, he wrote to all the provincial governors to the effect that he did not dismiss Khalid because he was offended with him or because

---

**Kitab al-Kharaj* of Qazi Abu Yusuf, p. 87, and *Tabari*, p. 2527.

he deemed him guilty of breach of trust, but that he had seen that the people grew more and more attached to him and that he accordingly considered it advisable to depose Khalid so that his admirers might realize that everything is disposed of by God.* These facts will enable an intelligent observer to easily understand the causes which led to the deposition of Khalid and the prudent considerations on which it was based.

PLAGUE AT AMWAS, 18 A.H./639 A.D.

VIRULENT plague broke out during this year in Syria, Egypt and Iraq and many a towering personality of Islam succumbed to it. The epidemic appeared towards the close of the year 17 A.H. and raged with the greatest rigour for many months. When Omar first heard of it he personally went to the infected area to concert measures for its suppression. On arriving at Surgh he learned from Abu Obaida and others, who had hastened to the spot to receive him, that the virulence of the plague was increasing by leaps and bounds. Omar sent for the First Muhajirin and the Ansar and invited an expression of their opinion. Different counsels were offered by the various people but the Muhajirin of the period of victory unanimously exclaimed that it was against the dictates of prudence that the Caliph

*_Tabari_, p. 2528.

should halt there. Omar acquiesced in the soundness of the advice and bade Abbas announce that all were to march on the morrow. Abu Obaida was an extreme fatalist. Great was his ire when he learned Omar's decision and in a tone of passion he cried out: "Fliest thou O Omar!—away from God's Will?" Omar bore this acrid remark with an unruffled mien and calmly replied: "Yes, I fly from God's Will but towards God's Will."

In short, Omar returned to Medina and addressed a letter to Abu Obaida asking him to come to Medina for a few days as he was wanted on business. Abu Obaida, thinking that Omar had called him for fear of the plague, wrote back in reply saying that Fate ruled everything and that he could not move from the place to save his own life leaving the Musalmans in danger. Omar wept as he read this letter and again wrote to Abu Obaida asking him to shift with his men to a better and healthier place as the spot where the troops were then encamped was low lying and damp. Abu Obaida complied with this order and moved to and encamped at Jabia which was noted for the excellence of its climate.

On arriving at Jabia Abu Obaida fell ill. The attack was violent and he felt that he could not survive it. He assembled the men around him and uttered his last behest in the most stirring terms. He appointed Muaz ibn Jabal as his successor and as the time for prayers was at hand he ordered that

Muaz should act as Imam. Abu Obaida was now in his last moments and ere the prayers were finished he passed away. The epidemic was still raging with unmitigated intensity and the troops were beset with dire confusion. Amr ibn al-As told the people that the dread scourge destroying them was presumably one of the calamities of the Israelites, and that all should, therefore, do well to fly from the spot. When Muaz heard this he ascended the pulpit and delivered an edifying sermon in which he said that the plague then raging was not a calamity but the mercy of God. After the sermon was over he repaired to his tent and found his son seized with the plague. With the utmost firmness and composure he addressed his son in the memorable words of the Quran purporting to be uttered by Abraham thus: "My son! this is a visitation from God; do not let doubt rankle in thy breast." The son rejoined (using the well-known reply made by Ismail to his father): "You will find me resigned if so be the will of heaven." With these words he breathed his last. Muaz had no sooner consigned his son to the grave than he himself fell a prey to the fatal malady. He appointed Amr ibn al-As to succeed him and with the idea dominating his soul that earthly life was only a veil that hid the Divine vision, serenely and rapturously breathed his last.

What a strange thing is the infatuation begotten of Religion! The plague was raging with over-

whelming impetuosity and thousands were dying, but Muaz all along considered this havoc to be the clemency of God and made no arrangements whatever to suppress it. Amr ibn al-As, however, was not so infatuated. At the death of Muaz he harangued the people saying that the plague when it once made its appearance spread like wild fire and that the troops should therefore move to the purer and freer air of the mountains. This decision of Amr was disapproved by some of the Companions who shared Muaz's views so much so that one of them openly exclaimed "thou liest"; but Amr persisted in his decision and enforced it. In accordance with his orders the troops scattered about along mountain sides and the danger from the plague was thus over. This measure was, however, adopted after twenty-five thousand Musalmans (who would have sufficed to conquer half of the globe) had sunk into the grave. These included such distinguished and august personages as Abu Obaida, Muaz ibn Jabal, Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan, Haris ibn Hisham, Suhail ibn Omar, Otba ibn Suhail. Omar was kept duly informed of all that took place, and issued the necessary orders as occasion demanded. When the news reached him of the death of Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan and Muaz, he appointed Muawiya the governor of Damascus and Shur Habil that of Jordan.

This direful pestilence arrested the progress of Islamic arms all of a sudden. The army instead of

attacking the enemy was involved in its own affliction. Thousands of children became orphans, thousands of women were left widows. The property of those who had died lay unclaimed and uncared for. Omar, on receiving this information, resolved to visit Syria. Leaving Ali in charge of Medina he proceeded to Ella. His slave Yarfa and a large number of Companions accompanied him. As he approached Ella he made over his seat on the dromedary which he rode to his slave for some reason known to himself and mounted the slave's camel. As the people on the way enquired where the Commander of the Faithful was, Omar replied: "There you see him in front of you." In this wise he entered Ella and sojourned there for two or three days. The threadbare shirt of coarse linen which he wore was torn at the back by friction against the camel's litter. He asked the priest of Ella to mend it and the worthy man patched it with his own hands, presenting the Caliph with a new shirt at the same time. Omar, however, was content with his own shirt which he said served him for a very good absorbent of perspiration. From Ella he proceeded to Damascus, and halting in his tour for three or four days in each of the several districts of Syria made proper arrangements where necessary. He disbursed the pay of the troops and sending for the heirs of those who had died of the plague put them in possession of their lawful inheritance. He

established military outposts at each of the frontier stations, posted fresh officials to appointments which had fallen vacant, assembled the people at the time of his departure and delivered a speech bearing upon the arrangements made by him.

Direful famine visited Arabia this year and but for the zealous activity displayed by Omar in concerting measures for affording relief, hundreds of thousands would have died of starvation. The same year he apportioned salaries and allowances to the Muhajirin, the Ansar and the several clans of Arabia. These arrangements will be dwelt upon at length in the second part of this book.

QAISARIA, 19 A.H./640 A.D.

QAISARIA is situated on the Mediterranean coast and is reckoned among the districts of Palestine. It is in ruins at present but at the time of which we are speaking it was a large and populous town and, according to Balazuri, possessed three hundred busy streets. Amr ibn al-As first invaded this city in the year 13 A.H./635 A.D. He laid siege to the city and lay encamped around it for a long time but could not take it. On Abu Obaida's death Omar appointed Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan as his successor and ordered him to march against Qaisaria. Yazid proceeded at the head of seventeen thousand troops and invested the city. In the year 18 A.H./639 A.D.,

however, he fell sick and leaving his brother, Amir Muawiya, as his *locum-tenens* he repaired to Damascus where he died. Amir Muawiya now actively laid siege to the city. The garrison made occasional sallies but were defeated each time. Still, however, the city held out. One day a Jew named Yusuf came to Amir Muawiya and told him of a subterranean passage which, threading the interior of the city, led to the very gate of the citadel. Some of the warriors accordingly availed themselves of this underground passage and bursting all of a sudden into the city opened the gates from within. The entire Muslim army which was waiting outside for this opportunity simultaneously rushed in and in a short time the dead and dying lay in heaps. Historians state that the Christian forces were estimated at a minimum of eighty thousand of whom very few escaped. As Qaisaria was an important place the entire Syrian horizon was cleared of turbulent elements by its fall.

JAZIRA,* 16 A.H./637 A.D.

THE fall of Madain awakened the Persians to the true state of things. Hitherto they had regarded Arabia with an air of supreme contempt but now

---

* Jazira is the name of that stretch of territory which lies between the Tigris and the Euphrates. It is bounded on the west by Asia Minor and parts of Armenia, on the south by Syria, on the east by Iraq and on the north by parts of Armenia. It is shown in the map attached to this work.

the very name of Arabia made them tremble. Each Persian satrapy now separately commenced preparations for coping with the formidable Arab. The first to take up arms was Jazira as its border was quite contiguous to Iraq. Saad reported this to Omar who deputed Abdulla ibn al-Mu'tam to head the expedition. Omar was particularly interested in this expedition and he therefore himself nominated the other officers also who were to accompany it. The command of the advanced guard he gave to Rabi ibn al-Afkal, that of the right and left wings to Haris ibn Hassan and Farat ibn Hayan respectively, while Hani ibn Qais was placed by him at the head of the rear-guard. Abdulla ibn al-Mu'tam marched on Takrit * at the head of five thousand troops and invested the city. The siege lasted for more than one month and twenty fair attempts were made to carry the fortified city by storm. Several Arab clans such as Ayad, Taghlab and Namr were in league with the Persians. Abdulla despatched to them a secret message to the effect that it was a great shame that being Arabs they should submit like slaves to the yoke of Persia. This taunt had the desired effect. All of them embraced Islam, and sent word in reply asking Abdulla to attack the city promising to break with the Persians and

* Takrit is situated on the frontier of Jazira and lies in close contiguity to Iraq. The river Tigris flows on its eastern side and is six stages from Mosul.

join hands with him at the right moment. This was agreed upon and the assault was led on the day fixed for the purpose. As the Persians sallied out to meet the Musalmans, their Arab allies attacked them on the rear. The Persians were thus caught in a trap and were totally annihilated.

This battle in reality forms part of the Jazirite campaign. It was, however, incidentally included in the campaign of Iraq, and Musalman historians do not therefore open the conquest of Jazira with it. Moreover even in the period of which we are speaking this conflict was not regarded as separate from the campaign of Iraq. In the year 17 A.H. when Iraq and Syria had been thoroughly reduced Saad received an order from Omar to the effect that an expedition should be sent against Jazira. Saad accordingly deputed Ayaz ibn Ghanam to the task and placed five thousand troops under his command. Ayaz forthwith proceeded from Iraq in the direction of Jazira, and encamped in the vicinity of the town of Riha at one time the embodiment of the greatness of the Roman Empire. The governor of this city, after offering some slight resistance, capitulated on the usual terms of the *Jizia*. After Riha the whole of Jazira was reduced from one end to the other within a few days. Slight skirmishes took place at the following places: Riqa, Haran, Nasibain, Miyya Fazaqin, Samsat, Saruj, Qarqaisia, Zozan, Ain al-Warda.

KHOZISTAN*

IN the year 15 A.H., Mughira ibn Shu'ba was appointed governor of Basra and as the frontier of Khozistan lay in close contiguity to it, he deemed its conquest necessary, for peace and tranquillity could hardly have been maintained at Basra without taking such a step. So in the beginning of the year 17 A.H./637 A.D. he attacked Ahwaz which was called Hurmuz Shahr (the city of Hurmuz) by the Persians. The chief of this city obtained peace on the condition to pay a small sum annually and Mughira did not proceed further. In the year 17 A.H. Mughira was dismissed and Abu Musa Ashaari succeeded him. During these political changes the Chief of Ahwaz stopped his annual tribute and openly showed signs of rebellion. Abu Musa was compelled to resort to an appeal to arms and, mobilizing his forces, laid siege to Ahwaz. The imperial army stationed there fought with the utmost courage and firmness but was finally routed and the city was conquered. Thousands of persons were captured and made slaves. When Omar heard of this he ordered that all of them should be set free. The order was instantly complied with and all the slaves were liberated. Abu Musa then marched upon Manazar, a strong and fortified city. The

*Khozistan is the name of the territory which lies between Iraq and Persia. There are 14 large towns in it of which Ahwaz, which is shown in our map, is the most important.

citizens repelled this attack with courage and resolution. Muhajir ibn Ziad, an officer of note, was killed in this encounter and the citizens severed his head and displayed it as a ghastly trophy on the turret of their citadel.

Abu Musa left behind Rabi the brother of Muhajir to invest Manazar and himself marched upon Sus. Rabi succeeded in reducing Manazar while Abu Musa laid siege to Sus and cut off all communications from outside. Provisions had run short in the city and the chief was compelled to sue for peace on the condition that one hundred persons belonging to his family should be spared. Abu Musa accepted the terms. The chief was naming each individual of whose safety he was solicitous and the persons so pointed out were spared their lives. Unfortunately the chief failed to name himself. So when the agreed number of one hundred had been completed Abu Musa had the chief, who was beyond the fateful number, beheaded.

Ramharz was invested after Sus. The inhabitants agreed to pay an annual tribute of eight hundred thousand dirhams and so peace was concluded. Yezdgird was at Qum at this time and all the members of the royal family were with him. Reports of Abu Musa's high-handedness were reaching him constantly. Hurmozan the maternal uncle of Shiruya and a chief of great power and influence came before Yezdgird and represented that he would under-

take to stem the tide of the advancing Arabs if he were made the grand satrap of Ahwaz and Fars. Yezdgird forthwith issued a mandate conferring upon him the government of these vast provinces and entrusted him at the same time with the command of a considerable force. The capital of Khozistan was Shostar noted for its royal palaces and military cantonments. Hurmozan on arriving here had the fort repaired and strengthened with entrenchments and bastions. He then despatched heralds and criers in all directions to stir up enthusiasm among the people and to incite them to donn the panoply of war. The fire of national enthusiasm which had lain dormant so long was rekindled by this means and a powerful army was got up in a few days. Abu Musa, in a despatch to the Caliph, described the state of things and asked for reinforcements. Omar issued an order to Ammar ibn Yasir, then governor of Kufa, instructing him to despatch Numan ibn Maqran with one thousand men to co-operate with Abu Musa. This puny force however was of no avail against the formidable numbers of the enemy. So Abu Musa submitted a second representation to the Caliph urging that the vastly superior numbers of the enemy necessitated a large force to relieve him. On this Ammar received an order to the effect that he should leave Abdulla ibn Masud in charge of Kufa with half the troops stationed in that city while with the other half he

should personally hasten to Abu Musa's relief. Jarir Behli at the same time arrived at Jalula at the head of a large number of troops. Thus strengthened Abu Musa marched in the direction of Shostar and encamped close to the precincts of the city. Hurmozan, priding himself on the vast superiority of numbers, chose to take the offensive and sallying out of the fortified ramparts, attacked the Musalmans. Abu Musa's dispositions were made with consummate skill. He gave the command of the right wing to Bara ibn Malik, the brother of Ans the well-known Companion, that of the left wing to Bara ibn Azib Ansari, while the cavalry was placed by him under Ans. The two armies fought desperately and the conflict was a severely contested affair. Bara ibn Malik fought his way through the mass of the soldiery as far as the main gate of the rampart. Hurmozan was fighting most gallantly at the head of his warriors. At the gateway the two chieftains met each other in mortal combat. Bara was killed. Majzat ibn Saur, a captain in the Muslim right wing, simultaneously sprang forward and dealt Hurmozan a terrific blow. Hurmozan, however, parried the thrust and slew his second adversary as well. Still the day was won by the Musalmans. One thousand Persians were slain and six hundred made prisoners of war. Hurmozan shut himself up in his fort and continued the conflict.

One day a citizen paid a clandestine visit to

Abu Musa and offered to put him in the way of taking possession of the city on the understanding that his own life and property were respected. Abu Musa was only too glad to accept the terms. The man took with him an Arab named Ashras and crossing the Dajil canal, a branch of the Tigris, which runs below Shostar, entered the city through an underground passage. He then enveloped the face of Ashras in a veil and bid him follow like a servitor. Threading the streets and alleys of the city he entered the palace of Hurmozan itself accompanied by his veiled servant. Hurmozan was drowning care in a merry feast surrounded by the nobility and his courtiers. The citizen took Ashras all over the several buildings and giving him an insight into the topography of the position returned to Abu Musa to tell him that he had fulfilled his promise, and that the rest depended upon his (Abu Musa's) valour and luck. Ashras corroborated the citizen's statement and undertook to capture the city if he was accompanied by two hundred warriors, 'brave and true.' Abu Musa glanced at his soldiers. Two hundred veterans came forward and volunteered their lives in the service of God. Ashras led them into the interior of the city through the same subterranean corridor and arriving at the gateway of the rampart put the sentinels to sword and flung the gates wide open. Abu Musa was waiting outside with his men for this opportunity. No sooner

had the gates flown open than the entire Muslim army rushed in and the citizens were seized with consternation. Hurmozan fled and took refuge in the citadel. As the Musalmans approached it Hurmozan ascended the tower and cried out: "My sheaf still contains one hundred arrows and I cannot be captured till as many corpses have measured their length upon the ground. I, however, consent to come down on the understanding that I am taken to Medina and that the pronouncement of the decision whatever it be should rest with Omar." Abu Musa acquiesced in the proposal and deputed Ans to accompany Hurmozan to Medina. Hurmozan set out with great pomp and splendour. He was followed by many a chieftain of renown and all the members of his family. As he approached Medina he arrayed himself in all the lustrous dignity of a king. The gem-bedizened diadem known by the epithet of Azin graced his brow; a rich silk mantle was thrown over his shoulders; glittering jewels such as Persian Monarchs were wont to wear adorned his person and a scimitar set with precious stones hung by his girdle. In short he entered Medina the very picture of magnificence and glory and enquired from the people where the Commander of the Faithful was? He had indulged in the notion that the man whose fame rang throughout the world must needs have a correspondingly brilliant court. He was confounded,

however, when Omar, who was reclining on the sofa of dust in the courtyard of the mosque, was pointed out to him.

Hurmozan on entering the mosque was followed by hundreds of lookers-on who gazed on his glittering apparel and were struck with astonishment. Omar opened his eyes at the approaching footsteps and found the personification of Persian grandeur and splendour before him. He surveyed this mass of jewels and silks from head to foot and addressed the people standing by thus: "These are the witcheries of the despicable world." He then turned towards Hurmozan. The interpreter had not yet arrived. So Mughira ibn Shu'ba, who knew a little Persian, acted as interpreter. Omar first enquired from him his native-land (*watan*). Mughira was ignorant of the Persian word for *watan*. So he said "Which earth (*arz*) do you come from?" Then other matters were talked of. After the battle of Qadsia Hurmozan had many a time entered into treaties of peace with Saad but had every time broken the terms.* Two Musalman captains of note had been killed by him in the battle of Shostar. All this had incensed Omar to such a degree that he had definitely made up his mind to slay Hurmozan. With a view, however, to furnishing him with the formal means of undertaking his

* Tabari has narrated these events at full length.

defence he permitted him to say what he could to justify himself. Hurmozan said: "O Omar! as long as God was with us you were our slaves, now He is with you and we are your slaves." Thus saying he asked for a drink of water which was brought to him. Taking the cup in his hand he asked that he should not be slain till he had drunk it. Omar sanctioned this prayer. Hurmozan at once laid down the cup and said: "I will not drink the water now ergo you cannot according to your promise kill me." This fallacy completely baffled the astonished Omar.* Hurmozan now

*Richard Chenevix French, in his beautiful poem, describes this event at length. I give the poem here to enable such of my readers as are already acquainted with it to judge of it in the light of the facts narrated by the learned author of this book. The comparison will be found instructive as it will show that however deeply read a European author not, versed in Arabic, may be in the medieval history of his own Church or nation, he can hardly be supposed to have the same amount of insight into the minute details of the historical and traditional lore of Islam. Poetic license may, to a certain extent, justify the tone in which the poem is written, but ignorance of details is also one of its prominent features and an Arabic scholar such as Professor Shibli, thoroughly conversant with the historical literature of Islam, could alone have unravelled the tangled web of minute incidents looming hazily in the distant horizon of the seventh century.—*Translator.*

"Now the third and fatal conflict for the Persian throne was done,
And the Muslims' fiery valour had the crowning victory won.
Hurmozan, the last and boldest the invader to defy,
Captive, overborne by numbers, they were bringing forth to die.
Then exclaimed that noble captive: 'Lo, I perish in my thirst;
Give me but one drink of water, and let then arrive the worst!'
In his hand he took the goblet and a while the draught forbore,
Seeming doubtfully the purpose of the foeman of explore. Well
might then have paused the bravest—for, around him, angry
foes.

uttered the fundamental formula of the Islamic faith inculcating unity of belief and said that he had already embraced Islam at heart but that he had resorted to the stratagem lest the people should think that he had embraced Islam for fear of the sword.* Omar was immensely pleased on learning this and permitted Murmozan to dwell at Medina. An annuity of two thousand gold mohurs was also settled upon the Persian proselyte. Omar used frequently to consult him on questions of moment in connection with the expedition against Fars and other provinces of the Persian empire.

Jandi Sabur situated at some distance from Shostar was next invested. The siege continued for many days. One day the citizens flung open

With a hedge of naked weapons did that lonely man enclose.
But what fear'st thou?' cried the Caliph: 'Is it, friend, a secret blow?
Fear it not, our gallant Muslims no such treacherous dealing know.
Thou may'st quench thy thirst securely, for thou shalt not die before
Thou hast drunk this cup of water, this reprieve us thine—no more!'
Quick the Satrap dashed the goblet down to earth with ready hand,
And the liquid sunk for ever, lost amid the burning sand.
'Thou hast said that mine my life is, till the water of that cup
I have drain'd; then, bid thy servants that spilled water gather up!'
For a moment stood the Caliph as by doubtful passions stirred,
Then exclaimed, 'For ever sacred must remain a monarch's word.
'Bring another cup, and straightway to the noble Persian give.'
'Drink' I said before, 'and perish'—now I bid thee 'drink and live!'

**Iqd al-Farid* by Ibn Abd Rabbihi, Chapter on Stratagem in War.

the several gates of the rampart of their own accord and with the utmost composure and tranquillity busied themselves in their respective avocations. The Musalmans were astonished at the assurance and asked the citizens what it meant. They said in reply that the Musalmans had accorded them peace on the terms of *Jizia* and that therefore there was nothing to quarrel about. The Musalmans were surprised to learn this and did not know by whom peace was concluded. On inquiry, however, it was ascertained that a slave had secretly negotiated with the citizens granting them peace and safety. Abu Musa contended that the individual opinion of a slave could hardly carry sufficient weight in a problem of such momentous importance. The citizens, however, stoutly maintained that they had rightfully come within the pale of peace and that the distinction between a free born and a slave was of no consequence to them. The matter was thereupon referred to Omar who replied that the slave of the Musalmans was a Musalman himself and that the fact of his giving protection to any body was tantamount to that person's coming within the protection of all the Musalmans. The conquest of Jandi Sabur made Islam dominant throughout Khozistan and thus a new territory was added to the Realm of Islam.

IRAQ AJAM,* 21 A.H./641 A.D.

AS we have already mentioned, Yezdgird, after the fall of Jalula, went off to Rai. Aban Jaduya, the chief of Rai, however, proved treacherous. So the unhappy monarch wended his way to Khurasan *via* Isphahan and Kirman and took up his residence at Merv. The Persian sacred Fires had accompanied him throughout his peregrination. He had a temple erected for its reception and, secure from danger on every side, set up his court with his wonted regal splendour. Intelligence was brought to him here that along with Iraq the Arabs had also captured Khozistan while Hurmozan, the backbone of the Empire, was made a prisoner. He flew into a fit of impotant rage as he listened to these particulars. Although he was not the same mighty and awe-inspiring potentate as he was in the bygone days, when the Imperialism of Persia was still a huge unpricked bubble, still the effects of a sovereignty bequeathed by a hoary antiquity extending over three thousand years could hardly pass away all of a sudden. Hitherto the Persians had consoled themselves with the idea that the Arab invasion was an erratic cyclone

* The territory of Iraq is divided into two parts. The western part is called the *Iraq Arab* and the eastern part is termed the *Iraq Ajam*. The *Iraq Ajam* is bounded on the north by Tabristan, on the south by Shiraz, on the east by Khozistan, and on the west by the city of Maragha. At the time of which we are speaking Isphahan, Hamdan and Rai were its important cities. At present Rai is in ruins and Tehran, the capital of the Shahs of the Qachar dynasty, has sprung up near it.

the fury of which would be spent ere it passed their frontier and that therefore they had nothing to fear on the score of their own dominions. The conquest of Khozistan, however, showed them how the matters really stood. They now realized the danger which threatened them. Mandates and heralds from the Emperor arrived simultaneously and this caused a sudden and mighty upheaval throughout Tabristan, Jurjan, Damawand, Rai, Isphahan and Hamdan. The wave of spasmodic commotion did not stop here but passed over the remote confines of Khurasan and Sindh and a vast multitude comprising a hundred and fifty thousand fighting men came surging to Qum which was appointed the general rendezvous. Yezdgird conferred upon Mardan Shah, the son of Hurmoz, the chief command of this immense army and sent him to Nihawand. The banner of Kavah, regarded by the Persians as the harbinger of victory was brought out from among the sacred relics of ancient times as an auspicious omen. When Mardan Shah set out this auspicious banner was unfurled and was carried so as to stream over his head. Ammar ibn Yasir, at that time the governor of Kufa, informed Omar of all this. Omar repaired to the Prophet's mosque with the letter of Ammar in his hand and, reading out the letter, addressed the people present thus: "O people of Arabia! this time the Persians, one and all, have girded up their loins to sweep off the Musalmans from the face of the earth:

tell me what do you propose to do now?" Talha ibn Obaidulla rose and said: "O Commander of the Faithful! experience has made you wise. We know no more than this that we obey whatever you order us to do." Osman spoke next and observed: "In my opinion orders should be issued to the governors of Syria, Yaman and Basra to march with their respective forces towards Iraq while you should personally start from Medina at the head of the Medinites. At Kufa all the troops should assemble under your standard and then we may proceed in the direction of Nihawand." All approved of this view. Ali, however, was silent. Omar glanced at him and he spoke thus: "If the entire forces stationed in Syria and Basra were mobilized the frontier enemies would obtain possession of those territories and if you were to leave Medina the whole of Arabia would become involved in internecine agitation rendering our control even over our own country a matter of difficulty. My opinion is that you should not personally leave Medina but issue orders to the governors of Syria, Yaman, Basra and other provinces instructing each of them to despatch one-third of the forces under his command." Omar approved of this counsel and said that he already held the same view but that he did not like to pronounce his decision without consulting others. The question now arose who should be entrusted with the command of such a great expedition. The councillors racked their brains in vain to think of

the person who could lead this expedition. Those who were qualified for the task had their hands busy with other undertakings.

One of the manifold perfections of which Omar was a paragon, was that he had acquired such a comprehensive knowledge of his country and people that each individual of the nation was known to him by his individual traits of character and qualifications. On this occasion, therefore, all present unanimously declared that none could decide the matter better than the Caliph himself. Omar nominated Numan ibn Maqran and everyone approved of the selection. Numan marched from Kufa at the head of thirty thousand troops. Many a distinguished Companion accompanied this force, the more famous being Huzaifa ibn al-Yamin, Abdulla ibn Omar, Jarir Behli, Mughira ibn Shu'ba and Amr Maadi-Karab. Numan was informed through his spies that the coast was clear as far as Nihawand. So he advanced uninterrupted close up to Nihawand and encamped at Isphahan, a place nine miles this side of Nihawand. Omar had taken the precaution to instruct the Muslim forces in Fars to intercept any Persians that might march from that direction towards Nihawand. The enemy was thus deprived of a very large reinforcement.

The Persians sent a message to Numan asking him to depute an ambassador to negotiate terms of peace. Mughira ibn Shu'ba, who had on a former

occasion also performed this task, was appointed ambassador. The Persians arrayed their court in the utmost splendour and magnificence. Mardan Shah wore a crown and occupied a golden throne. To the right and left of the throne were seated princes and chieftains of various principalities glittering in their gold coronets and tunics of silk interwoven with gold while bracelets of massive gold encircled their wrists. Behind them were arrayed in a double row, forming a long vista, soldiers whose naked swords dazzled the eye with their brilliancy. Negotiations opened through an interpreter. Mardan Shah said: " O ye Arabs! if a people can possibly excel the other nations of the world in wretchedness, in indigence and in loathsomeness it is yourselves. These archers of mine who are standing about my throne can instantly seal your fate, but I cannot bear to see your foul blood polluting their arrows. Go away from this place even now and I will forgive you." Mughira replied: "You are quite right there. We are the wretched and contemptible lot you tell us, but the luxuries of this country have woven their siren web around us and I assure you that until our corpses are strewn over the ground we shall not forsake these luxuries". Thus the diplomatic mission proved abortive and preparations were commenced on both sides for the impending conflict. Numan entrusted the command of the right and the left wings to Huzaifa and Sawaid ibn Maqran respectively. He then appointed Qaaqa as the head

of the vanguard and Majasha as that of the rear-guard. On the side of the Persians Zardak headed the right and Bahman the left wing. The Persians had strewn *gokhrus* over the battle-field which rendered the advance of the Musalmans difficult, whereas the Persians sallied forth from the city and attacked the Musalmans at will. Seeing this Numan assembled his officers and invited their opinions. In accordance with the counsel proffered by Talaiha ibn Khalid al-Asadi the troops were arrayed in battle order and posted at a distance of six or seven miles from the city while Qaaqa was despatched at the head of a small body of troops to attack the city. The Persians made a desperate sally and with a view to barring all attempts at falling back scattered *gokhrus* along the field as they advanced. Qaaqa commenced action and then pretended a slow retreat. The Persians continued to advance till they crossed the zone of *gokhrus*. The bulk of the forces arrayed by Numan were anxiously awaiting for this opportunity. Just as the Persians came within range they (the Muslims) prepared for assault, but Numan prevented them. The incessant volleys of arrows fired by Persians killed thousands of Musalmans. Such, however, was their sense of discipline that in spite of the carnage the army stood steadfast without retaliating. Mughira repeatedly pointed out that the army was being mown down and that their chance of success was slipping away from their hands, but Numan was awaiting the moment

when the Sun had passed the Meridian as that was the time when the Prophet was wont to attack the enemy. At last the Sun did pass the Meridian. As usual, Numan cried *Allah Akbar* three times. At the first cry the men got ready for assault, at the second cry they poised their swords and at the third they flew at the enemy with a fury so irresistible and a desperation so mad that in a short time heaps of the dead and dying Persians lay everywhere. The battle-field ran red with blood so that the horses slipped at every step. Numan's horse slipped and fell bearing down its rider mangled to the ground. His distinguishing marks on the battle-field were a cap and a white mantle. No sooner had he fallen from his horse, than Nuaim ibn Maqran, his brother, snatched the standard from his hand and putting on his cap and mantle mounted his horse. Thus Numan's death was known to nobody and the battle continued to rage as usual. The firmness and resolution with which the Muslims were inspired during this period may be judged from the following event. When Numan fell wounded from his horse he commanded that nobody should leave the battle to lend him a helping hand. A soldier happened to pass by and seeing that he was breathing his last dismounted to minister to him in his dying moment. But the behest of his chief occurred to him immediately and, instantly mounting his horse, he hastened off leaving the expiring Commander-in-Chief unattended. After the

victory had been secured, a man went up to him. Numan was still alive. He opened his eyes and said: "Well! what is the issue?" "The Musalmans have gained the victory," he replied. Numan offered thanks to God and rejoined: "Let Omar know this at once."

Ere nightfall the Persians had been completely routed. The Muslims pursued them as far as Hamdan.

Huzaifa ibn Yaman, who was elected Generalissimo after Numan, proceeded to Nihawand where he ordered a halt. There was a famous fire temple here. Its high-priest waited upon Huzaifa and offered to put him in possession of a priceless treasure if his own life and property were spared. Huzaifa was only too willing to accede to this proposal and the priest accordingly brought and placed before him precious stones of the rarest value hoarded by Kisra Parwez for emergencies. Huzaifa distributed the spoils of war among the troops and despatched one-fifth, together with the precious stones, to Omar. For weeks together Omar had received no news from the seat of war. He was overjoyed when the messenger communicated to him the tidings of the victory, but tears quickly trickled down his face as he learned of the death of Numan and he wept for a long while over the sad news. The messenger then enumerated the names of other individuals who had been killed in the battle and said that there were many other persons besides who had been killed but whose names he did

not know. Omar wept a second time and said that it did not matter much whether Omar knew those persons or not because God did know them. On seeing the precious stones Omar passionately cried out: "Take these instantly back and tell Huzaifa to sell them off and divide the proceeds among the troops. These jewels were accordingly sold for fifty million dirhams.

Nearly thirty thousand Persians were slain in the battle of Nihawand. The Persians never recovered themselves after this battle. The Arabs named this victory 'the Victory of Victories.' Firoz, who was destined one day to assassinate Omar, was captured in this very battle.

GENERAL INVASION, 21 A.H./642 A.D.

HITHERTO Omar had not intended to undertake the general subjugation of Persia. The battles fought upto this time were defensive measures adopted by him with a view to maintaining the integrity of his own country. Iraq, no doubt, was annexed to the Islamic dominions but it was in reality a part of Arabia, as prior to the advent of Islam it was inhabited by the Arabs throughout. The conflicts waged after the reduction of Iraq were spontaneous and necessary links in the chain of the campaigns of Iraq. Omar would often say: "Would that a mountain of fire intervened between us and the

Persians so that they could neither attack us nor could we make inroads into their territory."

Nothing, however, could curb the restlessness of the Persians. They were constantly organizing new levies to attack the Musalmans and fomented insurrection in provinces which were in the possession of the Musalmans. The battle of Nihawand drew Omar's attention to this matter. He assembled the elite of the Companions and asked them the reason why there were frequent revolts in the conquered territories. They replied that sedition could not possibly be suppressed unless Yezdgird was turned out of Persia, for as long as the Persians knew that the heir to the Kaianian throne lived their hopes could not be cut off.

Accordingly Omar resolved to make a general invasion. He prepared several standards with his own hands and, naming them after each of the several provinces to be reduced, gave them to the famous Captains of the day. Thus the standard of Khurasan was conferred upon Ahnaf ibn Qais; that of Sabur and Ardsher upon Majasha ibn Masud; of Istakhar upon Osman ibn al-As al-Saqfi; of Fasa upon Saria ibn Rahm al-Kinani; of Kirman upon Suhail ibn Adi; of Sistan upon Asim ibn Omar; of Makran upon Hakam ibn Omais al-Taghlabi; and of Azarbaijan upon Otba. In the year 21 A.H. these generals proceeded to the respective provinces which they were deputed to reduce. We now

proceed to describe the doings of each of them systematically.

Isphahan forms the first link in this chain of conquests. Abdulla ibn Abdulla invaded this province in the year 21 A.H. Istandar, the satrap of this province, had gathered a large force, the vanguard of which was headed by Shahrbraz Jaduya a veteran of great experience. When the two forces confronted each other Jaduya rode forth into the battle-field and challenged any Musalman, who was so inclined, to meet him in single combat. Abdulla personally advanced to fight him. Jaduya was killed and his death brought the hostilities to an abrupt close. Istandar capitulated on the usual terms. Abdulla then advanced forward and laid siege to Jai or Isphahan proper. Fazusfan, the chief of this city, sent a message to Abdulla telling him that it was no use wasting the lives of others and that it would be better if they were to settle the matter between themselves by fighting it out. Abdulla accepted the challenge. The two adversaries appeared in the lists. Fazusfan opened the attack with a skilful pass of his sword at his opponent. Abdulla warded it off with equal skill and withstood his antagonist's onslaught so firmly and valiantly that the latter could not but admire him and said that he did not want to fight him but was willing to surrender the city on the condition that those who cared to remain there by paying the *Jizia*

should be allowed to do so while those who had a mind to leave the city should be permitted to go their way. Abdulla agreed to this condition and signed the treaty of peace accordingly.

News was brought in the meantime of a revolt that had broken out in Hamdan. Omar despatched Nuaim ibn Maqran to punish the rebels who forthwith proceeded to Hamdan at the head of twelve thousand troops and laid siege to it. The siege was however protracted. Nuaim spread his forces throughout the surrounding districts till every place except Hamdan was reduced. The beleaguered garrison of Hamdan lost heart on seeing this and sued for peace. Hamdan was thus subjugated but Dailam formed an offensive and defensive alliance with Rai and Azarbaijan and gathered a considerable army. Farkhan's father Zebindi, who was a chief of Rai, came to the help of the Dailamites from one direction while Rustam's brother Isfandyar arrived with the same object from Azarbaijan. The triple force met in the valley of Rode and the allies gave the Musalmans battle. The conflict was so fierce and sanguinary that it reminded them of the battle of Nihawand. At last the allies gave way and their defeat culminated in a complete rout. Urwa who had previously conveyed to Omar the news of the disaster at Jasr was chosen messenger of the present joyful tidings as a compensation. The news of the war preparations made by Dailam had plunged

Omar in deep anxiety. He was making arrangements for despatching a relieving force when Urwa appeared before him all of a sudden. The appearance of Urwa struck Omar as being of evil omen and an ejaculation of despair instinctively escaped his lips. Urwa, however, reassured him saying that God had given victory to the Musalmans.

Omar wrote a letter to Nuaim directing him to appoint someone to act for him as governor of Hamdan, while he should personally advance on Rai. The satrapy of Rai was at that time in charge of Siawash the grandson of Bahram Chobin. He sought aid from the chieftains of Dunyawand, Tabaristan, Qaus and Jurjan. All despatched reinforcements, but Zebindi who bore some personal grudge to Siawash joined hands with Nuaim ibn Maqran. With his co-operation the city was attacked and carried by storm. Nuaim gave the principality of Rai to Zebindi and ordered that the old city should be demolished, and a new one constructed on its ruins. In pursuance of orders received from Omar, Nuaim took up his quarters at Rai and despatched his brother Suwaid to reduce Qumas which fell without a blow. With the subjugation of Qumas the Arabs became complete masters of Iraq Ajam.

AZARBAIJAN,* 22 A.H./643 A.D.

AS already stated Omar had deputed Otba (ibn Farqad) and Bukair to reduce Azarbaijan and had fixed their respective bases of operation. Bukair on arrival at the battle-field was confronted by Isfandyar, who was defeated and captured alive. Otba's advance was on the other hand checked by Isfandyar's brother Bahram who too was defeated and took to flight. On learning of his brother's defeat Isfandyar told Bukair that as the fire of war had been put out he was willing to accept the terms of *Jizia*. As Azarbaijan was under the control of these two brothers, Otba set Isfandyar free on the condition that as chief of Azarbaijan he should make regular payment of *Jizia*. According to the historian Balazuri Huzaifa ibn Yaman received the standard of Azarbaijan. Marching from Nihawand he reached Ardbel, the capital of Azarbaijan. The chief of Ardbel gathered a large army from Majarwan Maimand, Surat, Sabz, Mianaj and other places, confronted Huzaifa and was defeated. He, however, secured

*In looking for Azarbaijan in the annexed map the city of Tabrez should be regarded as its capital. The ancient capital was Maragha. Barda and Ardbel were the two important cities of this province. The derivation of the word Azarbaijan is interpreted in two different ways. The one is that Azarbad, a magian high-priest, had built a fire temple which was called Azarabadgan ; hence the name . According to the other account the word 'Azar,' in the Pahlavi philology, means fire while the meaning of the word 'Baigan' is preserver. As this province abounded in fire temples it acquired this name which in the Arab accent became Azarbaijan.

peace by offering to pay an annual tribute of eight hundred thousand dirhams. Huzaifa then attacked Moqan and Jablani both of which places fell before his victorious arms. In the meantime the Caliph issued a mandate setting aside Huzaifa and appointing Otba ibn Farqad in his place. Revolt broke out throughout Azarbaijan ere Otba reached it so that he had to subjugate these places a second time.

TABARISTAN,* 22 A.H./643 A.D.

WE have stated above that when Nuaim had conquered Rai, his brother Suwaid advanced on Qumas, which vast province fell without a blow. Jurjan, the famous district of Tabaristan, lay in close proximity to Qumas. Suwaid opened negotiations with Rozban, the chief of this district, who accepted the terms of *Jizia.* A treaty was drawn up in which it was explicitly stipulated that the Musalmans were responsible for maintaining peace in Jurjan, Dehistan and the adjoining territory, while such of the natives as would help the Musalmans to repel the invasions of outsiders would be exempted from the payment of *Jizia.* On learning the conditions on which Jurjan

*The province of Tabaristan is shown in the map as included in the conquests achieved during the reign of Caliph Osman, because during the Caliphate of Omar, the *Jizia* was only levied on the province and its integrity was otherwise unaffected. It is bounded on the east by Khurasan and Jurjan, on the west by Azarbaijan, on the north by the sea of Jurjan and on the south by Hubail. Bastam and Astarabad are its important cities.

had obtained peace, Sipehdar, the chief of Tabaristan, also secured peace on the understanding that he would pay an annual tribute of five hundred thousand dirhams, the Musalmans having no other claim upon him nor he any upon the Musalmans.

ARMENIA*

AFTER conquering Azarbaijan, Bukair moved forward. He had arrived quite close to Bab when Omar despatched a fresh body of troops to reinforce him. Shahrbraz, the chief of Bab, was a Magian and was under the sway of Persia. When he learned of the advance of the Musalmans he personally waited upon Bukair and told him that he had no sympathy with the base-born Armenians, that he was of Persian extraction and that when Persia itself had been conquered he was ready to signify his obedience. One request he would, however, make which was that instead of levying the *Jizia* he should be called upon to provide military aid when necessary. As the *Jizia* was nothing but the price of military protection accorded to the people of the conquered land this request was

*The province of Armenia is a part of Asia Minor. It is bounded on the north by the Black Sea, on the south by the hilly and desert tracks extending to a long distance, on the east by Gurjistan (Georgia) and on the west by Turkey. As the conquest of this province was completed during the Caliphate of Osman it is shown in the map in a colour different from that assigned to the territories conquered by Omar.

acceded to. The Muslim army then continued its triumphant march forward. Abd al-Rahman ibn Rabia proceeded in the direction of Balkhar, the capital of Khazar. Shahrbraz who accompanied him, wonderingly inquired: "Do you really mean to invade that territory? It was a consolation to us in our own days that the fierce people of that land did not make an inroad into our own dominions." Abd al-Rahman confidently replied that he could not rest until he had penetrated into the very heart of that stubborn land. Hardly, however, had he reduced Baiza before the Caliphate of Omar came to an end. In the meantime Bukair had conquered and annexed Qan, the starting point of the Aran frontier, to the Islamic Empire. On the other hand Habib ibn Maslama and Huzaifa marched on Tiflis and the al-Lan mountains respectively. The Caliphate of Omar, however, came to an abrupt close ere the banner of Islam had time to float over these places. These unfinished expeditions were carried through during the reign of Osman.

FARS,* 23 A.H./644 A.D.

FARS was first invaded in the year 17 A.H. As, however, the inroad was not made at Omar's instance

*A large portion of Iraq has been included in Fars in modern geography but at the time to which our map relates it was bounded on the north by Isphahan, on the south by the Persian Gulf, on the east by Kirman and on the west by Iraq Arab. Its largest and most famous city is Shiraz.

nor had complete success attended the Muslim arms at the time, we did not deem it proper to speak of it in connection with the events which took place in that year. After the conquest of Iraq and Ahwaz, lands which lay in close contiguity to the Arabian border, Omar used often to say: "Would that a mountain of fire intervened between us and Persia." War with Fars however broke out incidentally. Ala ibn al-Hazrami was appointed governor of Bahrain in 17 A.H. He was a man of strong will and lofty aspirations, and as, owing to certain circumstances, he regarded Saad Abi Waqqas with feelings of rivalry it was natural that he should long to eclipse the latter in every undertaking. When Saad won the battle of Qadsia, Ala became jealous of his fame and the sentiment mastered him so far that without even obtaining permission from the Caliph he equipped an expedition and invaded Fars by sea. Khaleed ibn Munzir was the Commander-in-Chief while Jarud ibn al-Mualla and Suwar ibn al-Hamam held divisional commands. On arriving at Istakhar the ships cast anchor and the Muslim forces landed. The governor of Istakhar was a magian priest who confronted the Musalmans with a large army. His first move was to out-manoeuvre the Musalmans by taking up a position between them and the sea thus cutting off all means of escape in that direction. The Muslim forces were comparatively very small and their ships had, in a way, been taken possession

of by the enemy; but nothing could daunt the firm and resolute Commander-in-Chief. He led the assault with the greatest courage and enthusiasm and cried out to his men: "O Musalmans! do not lose heart. The enemy have attempted to deprive us of our ships but they shall be disappointed. Our ships as well as their territory shall be ours if so be the Will of God." Khaleed and Jarud fought most valiantly with their respective war cries on their lips and slew the Persians by thousands. Khaleed's war cry was:

> O sons of Abd al-Qais prepare,
> For battle, for a band
> Of warriors fresh to your relief
> Equipped at Jara stand,
> And all are well renowned in feats
> Of swordsmanship, and sing
> Their praises; how on battle-field
> Their flashing rapiers ring.

In short, the conflict proved of a most sanguinary character and although it terminated in a victory for the Musalmans they could not march into the interior as the major part of the army was destroyed. They could not but fall back but the enemy had sunk the ships. So they were forced to proceed by land in the direction of Basra. Unfortunately the outlet was barred on that side also. The Persians had already taken the precaution to impede all the resorts and had posted troops everywhere.

Omar was greatly incensed on learning of the

invasion of Fars. He wrote a letter to Ala severely admonishing him for the ill-advised step he had taken and at the same time issued an order to Otba ibn Ghazwan instructing him to instantly equip and despatch a flying column to Persia to save the Muslims. In pursuance of the command Abu Sabra, at the head of twelve thousand troops, advanced on Fars and succeeded in effecting a junction with the remnant of the Musalmans who were in a very precarious position. The magians had on the other hand despatched heralds and criers in every direction and gathered a considerable army which was headed by Shahrak. A desperate battle was waged and Abu Sabra won the victory. As, however, he had no orders to advance further, he returned to Basra. After the battle of Nihawand, when Omar despatched troops in several directions, an expedition was sent by him against Fars also and separate bodies of troops were deputed to reduce it. The Persians had made Toj their headquarter where they had carried on war preparations on a grand scale. But they had to disperse when they saw that the Islamic forces were spreading in various directions, and this decentralization was the oxordium to their defeat. Sabur, Ardsher, Toj and Istakhar all these places fell one after the other. During the latter part of Omar's Caliphate however (*i.e.*, in the year 23 A.H.), when Osman ibn Abi al-As was appointed governor of Bahrain, Shahrak the satrap of Fars

fomented a revolt and all the conquered places shook off the yoke of the Muslim subjugation. Osman despatched his brother Hakam at the head of a considerable force to teach the Persians a lesson that they should never forget. Hakam commenced by taking the island of Abarkawan and advanced on Toj which also fell. He ordered a permanent halt there, and had mosques constructed and many Arab families settled at that place. Ever and anon he would attack the frontier cities and return to Toj after a successful foray. In this manner he helped himself to large slices out of the districts of Ardsher, Sabur, Istakhar and Arjan. Shahrak was in a violent rage when he saw himself thus despoiled, and having gathered a large army marched on Toj. Hakam, however, forestalled him and he was still at Ramshahr when he was confronted by the former. Shahrak made his dispositions in a great order. He posted a body of troops in the rear with the express purpose of putting to indiscriminate slaughter any one who might turn his back on the battle-field. The conflict was hotly contested and lasted long. The Persians were totally defeated, Shahrak having been killed. After this Osman despatched separate bodies of troops in several directions. The moral effect of this victory was great. In whatever direction Osman marched he gained signal victories. Gazrun, Nobindjan, Arjan, Shiraz and Sabur, the chief cities of Fars, were taken by Osman himself

while Fasa, Darabjird and other places were conquered by his captains.

KIRMAN,* 23 A.H./644 A.D.

SUHAIL IBN ADI was despatched to conquer Kirman. He accordingly invaded this province in the year 23 A.H. at the head of an army the vanguard of which was under the command of Bashir ibn Omar al-Ijli. The satrap of Kirman who had sought for and received aid from Qafs and other places gave battle but was killed on the battle-field at the hands of Nusair. The Muslim forces then marched forward as far as Jiraft and Sirjan. Innumerable herds of camels and goats fell to their lot as spoils of war. Jiraft was the trading centre of Kirman while Sirjan was its largest town.

SISTAN,† 23 A.H./644 A.D.

THIS province was conquered by Asim ibn Omar. The inhabitants showed fight on the frontier but took to flight. Asim continued his advance and

* Its earlier appellation is Kirmania. It is bounded on the north by Kohistan, on the south by the Persian Gulf, on the east by Sistan and on the west by Fars. Its ancient capital was Kawasir (Barosir) the site of which is now occupied by Jiraft.

† Sistan is called Sajistan by the Arabs. It is bounded on the notth by Hirat, on the south by Makran, on the east by Sindh and on the west by Kohistan. Its most important city is Zaranj where abundant fruit is produced. The area is 25,000 square miles.

laid siege to Zaranj which is another name for Sistan. After the siege had lasted a few days the besieged sued for peace on the terms that all their arable lands should be regarded as protected. Asim accepted the term and the Musalmans fulfilled the conditions so faithfully that whenever they had occasion to pass by the side of a cultivated piece of land they would hurry on to avoid touching the cultivation. By the possession of this province the Musalmans obtained the key to the conquest of all the territories lying between Sind and the Balkh canal. Occasional expeditions were accordingly sent against these territories.

MAKRAN,* 23 A.H./644 A.D.

HAKAM ibn Amr al-Taghlabi was deputed to the conquest of Makran. He marched at the head of his forces in the year 23 A.H. and encamped on the side of the Makran river. Rasal, the king of Makran, forestalled the Musalmans in crossing the river and arrayed his forces in battle order. After a severely contested conflict Rasal was defeated and Makran was taken. Hakam's despatch to the Caliph communicating the news of the victory was accompanied with a few elephants which were

* Nowadays one half of Makran is called Baluchistan. The historian Balazuri describes Daibal, a city in Sind, as the limit of Omar's conquests. Tabari, however, puts down Makran as the terminus of the conquests and we have followed him by giving the same limit to Omar's conquests in our map.

captured in the spoil. Omar enquired from Sahar Abdi, the messenger, particulars about Makran. He said: "It is a land where the plains are stony and water is scanty; where the fruits are unsavoury and the enemy are noted for their bravery; where good is small and evil is all in all; and where showers of plenty scarcely fall." "You need not have been particular about rhyming when recounting events," observed Omar on hearing this poetic description. "I have only described facts," rejoined Sahar. Omar now issued an order instructing his several generals to stop in their onward careers. Thus Makran is the terminus of the conquests achieved during the reign of Omar. This is, however, Tabari's account. The historian Balazuri says that the Muslim forces marched as far as the low lying parts of Daibal and Thana. If this be true then it appears that Islam had reached Sind and India during the Caliphate of Omar.

THE FALL OF KHURASAN*

THE FINAL DISCOMFITURE OF YEZDGIRD 23 A.H./644 A.D.

WE have already stated above that of the officers deputed by Omar to invade the different countries

*According to the learned Balazuri Khurasan comprised of the whole of Mawara al-Nahr, Farghana, Khawarazm, Takharistan and Sistan. The fact, however, is that the boundaries of Khurasan have varied from time to time. Its famous cities were Naishapur, Marw, Hirat, Balkh, Tus, Fasa and Abi-Dard of which the last two are in ruins now.

Ahnaf ibn Qais was entrusted with the expedition against Khurasan. Ahnaf proceeded in the direction of Khurasan in the year 22 A.H. He arrived at Hirat *via* Tibsin and, having taken it, advanced on Marw Shahjahan where Yezdgird, the Emperor of Persia, was staying. On learning of Ahnaf's approach, however, he left for Marwrod and sought aid from the Emperor of China and other kings. Ahnaf left Harisa ibn al-Numan Bahili in charge of Marw Shahjahan and himself marched on Marwrod. Again the unhappy monarch took to flight and made straight for Balkh. In the meantime reinforcements arrived from Kufa under the command of such officers as Alqama ibn al-Nazri, Rabi ibn Amir al-Tamimi, Abdulla ibn Abi Aqil al-Saqfi and Ibn Umm Ghizal al-Hamdani. With the help of these fresh troops Ahnaf attacked Balkh. Yezdgird was defeated and, crossing the intervening river, entered the dominions of the Chinese Emperor. Ahnaf now found the coast clear and took possession of all the territories lying between Naishapur and Takharistan. He ordered a halt at Marwrod fixing it as his headquarter and in his despatch to Omar wrote to say that the banner of Islam floated over Khurasan. Omar was not an advocate of the forward policy and disliked the idea of territorial expansion. On reading Ahnaf's letter he observed: "Would that a river of fire intervened between us and Khurasan." Of course he praised Ahnaf for his high spirit and

declared that Ahnaf was the pearl of the Orientals, but in the letter which he wrote back in reply he instructed that general to stop where he was and advance no further. In the mean time the celestial monarch had accorded the fugitive Yezdgird an honourable reception. He then equipped a large army and accompanied the royal refugee back to Khurasan to fight in his cause. Ahnaf was halting at Balkh with twenty-four thousand troops when he heard of the Khaqan's march. Forthwith he proceeded to and encamped at Marwrod. In due time the Khaqan arrived at Marwrod visiting Balkh on the way. Yezdgird, detaching himself from the Khaqan, advanced separately on Marw Shahjahan. Ahnaf did not deem it advisable to give battle in the open plains. He took up his position on a piece of ground behind which lay ridges of mountains. The contending armies lay opposite to each other in battle-array, for a long time, without fighting. Morning and evening the Persian warriors arrayed themselves in war suits and went forth into the battle-field, but as no one from among the Musalmans responded to their challenge, they returned to their camp without an encounter. The manner in which the Tartars gave battle was this: First three warriors went into the battle-field in successive order, playing on instruments of martial music, and they were then followed by the whole army. One day Ahnaf appeared on the battle-field in person.

As usual a Tartar rode forth from the opposite side beating a drum and displaying a standard. Ahnaf attacked him and many a blow was dealt and warded off on either side. At last Ahnaf transfixed his adversary with a huge spear thrust and waxing enthusiasm he exclaimed: "Certainly, every chief has a right to colour the arrow or break it."

As usual two other Tartar warriors followed their slain comrade but were killed at Ahnaf's hands. The Khaqan now personally came into the battlefield and saw the dead bodies of his warriors stretched upon the ground. As this was an evil omen he lost heart and told his veterans that it was no use losing their lives in a stranger's cause. He then issued instant orders to his army to march back.

Yezdgird lay encamped around Marw Shahjahan when this news reached him. Despairing of victory he gathered together all his treasures and resolved to proceed to Turkistan. His courtiers, on seeing that territorial wealth was escaping from the Persians for ever, endeavoured to prevent him from taking the step. He did not, however, listen to their counsels. On this they turned against him and despoiled him of all his vast riches. Shorn of all his splendour Yezdgird hied to the Khaqan and lived at Farghana*, the Khaqan's capital, till the end

* The author seems to have mixed up the Khaqan Cheen (the

of Omar's Caliphate. Ahnaf communicated to Omar the tidings of victory. When the messenger arrived at Medina Omar assembled all the citizens and imparted the glad tidings to them in a powerful oration which ended thus: "The empire of the Magians has become extinct this day and now they cannot injure Islam in any way. Remember, however, that if you too do not persevere in the way of Truth God will take the sovereign power from you and give it to others."

THE CONQUEST OF EGYPT, 20 A.H./641 A.D.

TO Amr ibn al-As is due the credit of originating the scheme of the conquest of Egypt. Prior to his adoption of Islam Amr was a trader and Egypt was the centre of his trading activities. The idea of conquering the land of the Pharaohs may not have even crossed his mind at that time but the picture of its fertility and luxuriance constantly flitted before his mental vision. When Omar undertook his last voyage to Syria, Amr waited upon and spoke to him about Egypt. Omar felt reluctant at first from considerations of prudence, but Amr's repeated representations prevailed upon him and he gave his consent for the invasion of Egypt

---

Emperor of China) with the Khan of Tartar, and a vein of inconsistency appears to run through several passages of this chapter. Farghana which is situated not very far from Samarqand could not have been the capital of China. Evidently the capital of the Khan of Tartar is meant.—*Translator.*

and to place four thousand troops at Amr's disposal. Still, however, Omar was ill at ease and thus addressed Amr: "Depart and may success attend you; but if you get a letter from me before reaching Egypt then wend your way back." Amr had arrived at Arish when Omar's letter reached him. Although it forbade him from advancing, still as the order was conditional Amr only observed: "We have already entered the confines of Egypt."* From Arish Amr marched to Farma. This town is situated on the Mediterranean coast. It is in ruins now but in those times it was populous and flourishing and had acquired much importance from the fact that it was the burial place of Galen. The Roman troops quartered here came out and confronted the Musalmans. The conflict was violent and lasted for one month. At last the Romans were defeated. From Farma Amr advanced on Fustat capturing Balbis and Umm Danin *en route.* At the time of which we are speaking Fustat was a flat plain which lay

* Maqrizi and others write to say that the messenger met Amr at Rafaj. Amr, apprehending that the contents of the letter were probably prejudicial to his forward march, did not take it from the messenger but observed that there was no hurry about it and that he would take it on arriving at the end of the march. On reaching Arish he tore open the letter and reading it, exclaimed: "The Commander of the Faithful desires me to desist from advancing if I have not reached Egypt but we have already entered its confines." It is unnecessary, however, to impute such an artifice to Amr. In the first place Balazuri and a number of other historians have explicitly stated that Amr received the letter at Arish but even if he did get the letter at Rafaj he is still free from blame as Rafaj lies within the Egyptian border.

between the river Nile and the Maqtam hill, and was covered with green fields and pasture. It was however, the site of a royal fort in which the deputies of the Roman empire stationed in Egypt were wont to dwell. The fort stood by the river-side and boats and gallies could, therefore, approach and cast anchor at its very gate. For these reasons the place was one of great stratagical importance. Amr made up his mind to take it first of all and commenced preparations for laying siege to it.

Maquqas, the ruler of Egypt and a tributary of Rome, had anticipated Amr ibn al-As in coming to the fort and was preparing to give battle to the invader. The strength of the fort and the small number of his troops led Amr to write to and ask for aid from the Caliph. Omar despatched ten thousand troops under four officers each of whom, he said in his letter to Amr, were equal in prowess to one thousand cavaliers. These officers were Zubair ibn al-Awwam, Obada ibn al-Samit, Miqdad ibn Omar and Maslama ibn Mukhallad. Considering the high rank of Zubair, Amr entrusted the chief command to him and made over everything connected with the conduct of the siege to his control. Zubair rode around the trenches and posted bodies of horsemen and foot soldiers at suitable positions. A storm of missiles was then showered upon the fort by means of huge catapults and this continued day after day. Seven long months passed by and still

the fort held out. Annoyed at this stubborn resistance Zubair one day exclaimed in a fit of desperation that he was going to sacrifice himself in the cause of Islam. Thus saying he grasped a naked sword and succeeded in ascending the parapet by means of a scaling ladder, a few other companions accompanying him. No sooner had they reached the parapet than they rent the air with deafening cries of "Allah Akbar." The army outside simultaneously shouted the same formula in such vociferous peals as to shake the very foundations of the fort. The Christians thinking that the Musalmans had contrived to force open the fort were seized with consternation and fled. Zubair, in the meantime, descended into the interior of the fort, and flung the gate wide open and the entire army rushed in. Maquqas, on seeing that the Musalmans had the advantage, capitulated and peace was forthwith declared.

One day the Christians invited Amr ibn al-As and his officers to a grand and sumptuous feast. Amr accepted the invitation and selected such persons to accompany him as were refined and well mannered.

Next day Amr invited the Romans. They appeared in grand form and took their seats on velvet-cushioned chairs. The Musalmans joined their Christian guests in the feast and as previously instructed by Amr all of them appeared in simple

Arab dress and partook of the refection in the Arab fashion. The victuals were also of a frugal nature, consisting of nothing but bread and meat. As the Arabs commenced eating they dipped juncks of meat into the gravy and fell to tearing them up with their teeth in such an unceremonious fashion that the gravy bespattered and soiled the rich togas of the fastidious Romans. When the meal was finished the Romans asked: "Where are the persons who joined us in yesterday's feast?"—(by which of course they implied that those persons were not so unmannerly as these). Amr rejoined, "They were statesmen and these are soldiers."

The treaty of peace, as concluded between Amr and Maquqas, embraced the whole of Egypt. Heracleus was, however, greatly displeased on learning this and said: "If the Copts could not fight the Arabs surely the numerical strength of the Roman warriors present in Egypt is not so small as to make them hesitate in encountering the invader." Forthwith he despatched a powerful army to oppose the Musalmans at Alexandria.

THE FALL OF ALEXANDRIA, 21 A.H./641-42 A.D.

AMR sojourned for a few days at Fustat after having taken it and wrote a letter to Omar informing him of the capture of Fustat and asking permission for an advance on Alexandria. Per-

mission arrived in due time and Amr ordered his forces to march. Now it so happened that a pigeon had set up its nest in the tent of Amr. As the tent began to be struck Amr casually spied the bird's nest and called out: "Leave it standing that our guest may not be put to inconvenience."* As a tent is called "Fustat" in the Arabic language and Amr, after his return from Alexandria, laid the foundations of a city near the tent which his hospitality had provided for the pigeon, the city itself

* Our world is one of analogies. Hardly has any incident occurred on the globe without having its parallel in one age or another. Little did Amr know that the magnanimous treatment accorded by him to a pigeon would, in after ages, be meted out unconsciously, though indentically, to a swallow by a Spanish Emperor. I cannot do better than to regale the reader with an effusion from Longfellow who exquisitely paints in it the incident which led me to trace the analogy above referred to.—*Translator.*

THE EMPEROR'S BIRD'S NEST

Once the Emperor Charles of Spain,
With his swarthy, grave commanders,
I forget in what campaign,
Long besieged, in mud and rain,
Some old frontier town of Flanders.

Up and down the dreary camp,
In great boots of Spanish leather,
Striding with a measured tramp,
These Hidalgos, dull and damp,
Cursed the Frenchmen, cursed the weather.

Thus as to and fro they went,
Over upland and through hollow,
Giving their impatience vent,
Perched upon the Emperor's tent,
In her nest they spied a swallow.

Yes, it was a swallow's nest,
Built of clay and hair of horses,
Mane, or tail, or dragon's crest,
Found on hedge-rows east and west,
After skirmish of the forces.

acquired the name of 'Fustat' (English Fostat) and has been known by the same appellation down to the present day. In short, Amr advanced in 21 A.H. in the direction of Alexandria. The Roman colonists, who had settled between Fustat and Alexandria, sought to impede his advance and a large multitude including thousands of Copts also advanced in the direction of Fustat to intercept the march of the Musalmans. At Karbun the two hosts confronted each other. The Musalmans made a

Then an old Hidalgo said,
As he twirled his grey mustachio,
"Sure the swallow overhead
Thinks the Emperor's tent a shed,
And the Emperor but a Macho!"

Hearing his imperial name
Coupled with those words of malice,
Half in anger, half in shame,
Forth the great campaigner came
Slowly from his canvas palace.

"Let no hand the bird molest"
Said he solemnly "nor hurt her!"
Adding then by way of jest,
"Golondrina is my guest,
'Tis the wife of some deserter!"

Swift as bowstring speeds a shaft,
Through the camp was spread the rumour
And the soldiers, as they quaffed
Flemish beer at dinner, laughed
At the Emperor's pleasant humour.

So unharmed and unafraid
Sat the swallow still and brooded,
Till the constant cannonade
Through the walls a breach had made,
And the siege was thus concluded.

desperate charge and numberless Christians were slain. No one dared to offer any resistance after this and Amr arrived at Alexandria very shortly afterwards. Maquqas had a mind to capitulate on the terms of *Jizia* but could not do so for fear of the Romans. Still he sued for a truce but Amr would not listen to such a proposal. Maquqas had now recourse to a stratagem. With a view to inspiring the Musalmans with awe he ordered all the citizens to put on their armour and arrange themselves in rows on the parapet of the fortifications in full view of the Musalmans. The order extended to the women as well and to avoid recognition they turned their faces in the direction of the city. On this Amr sent the citizens the following message: "We have guessed your purpose but you should remember that superiority of numbers has had very little to do with the conquests which we have hitherto achieved. The grand and mighty array which characterized your monarch Heracleus when he confronted us is well-

Then the army elsewhere bent,
Struck its tents as if disbanding,
Only not the Emperor's tent,
For he ordered, ere he went,
Very curtly, "Leave it standing."

So it stood there all alone,
Loosely flapping, torn and tattered,
Till the brood was fledged and flown,
Singing o'er those walls of stone
Which the cannon shots had shattered.

—*Longfellow.*

known to you and what the result of that conflict was is not unknown either."* As the message was delivered Maquqas cried out: "Quite so it was these Arabs who forced our monarch to betake himself to Constantinople." This cutting remark infuriated the Roman chiefs. They vented their spleen by hurling bitter invectives at Maquqas and commenced preparations for a battle.

As Maquqas had no wish to fight he had obtained a promise from Amr that no harm should be done to his people, the Copts, as he was not on the side of the Romans. The Copts not only took no part in fighting on either side throughout this conflict, but gave a good deal of help to the Musalmans. They repaired the bridges and made the road between Fustat and Alexandria to facilitate the march of the Muslim army and it was through them that provisions were obtained during the siege of Alexandria. Occasionally the Romans sallied out of the fort and attacked the Musalmans. One day there was a severe engagement. From the shooting of arrows it came to the clanging of swords. A Roman issued forth from the ranks and challenged any Musalman, who felt so inclined, to single combat. Maslama ibn Mukhallad rode forward and the two adversaries were engaged in a mortal tussle. The Roman hurled his opponent to the ground and, bending down, was in the act of

* *Futuh al-Buldan*, p. 220.

dealing him a blow with his sword when a Muslim cavalier dashed forward and saved his life. At this Amr was so enraged that tramping upon all the canons of good breeding and laying aside all regards for Maslama's rank he cried out: "The battle-field is no place for cowards." This withering sarcasm cut Maslama to the quick, but he prudently held his peace.

The conflict was raging with unabated violence. At last the Musalmans by a tremendous effort drove the Romans into the fort pressing them hard. A desperate hand to hand struggle ensued in the courtyard of the castle and continued for a long while. Presently the Romans rallied and making a furious onslaught succeeded in turning the Musalmans out of the fortification, and shut the gates in their face. As chance would have it, Amr ibn al-As, Maslama and two others were left inside. The Romans attempted to capture them alive but when they gave evidence of selling their lives dearly the Romans made this proposal: "Let one combatant on either side ride forward and meet in mortal combat: if our man is killed we shall set you free and allow you to leave the fort but if your man is killed then all of you throw down your arms." Amr ibn al-As gladly accepted these conditions and moved forward to engage in the combat himself. Maslama, however, prevented him observing that he was the Commander-in-Chief and if any harm

befell him everything would be upset. Thus saying he pressed his steed forward and met the Roman in full career. Many a blow was exchanged and either party stood expectant eagerly watching the grim result. At last Maslama dealt a blow cleaving the Roman in twain. The Roman did not know that the Muslim generalissimo was one of the small gallant party which had accepted their challenge. As agreed upon they flung open the gate of the fort and the four warriors escaped safe and sound from the perilous position in which they had so recently been placed. Amr apologised to Maslama for his former affront and the latter readily accepted the apology as sincerely as it was offered.*

The longer the siege lasted the deeper was Omar plunged in anxiety. In a letter to Amr he wrote: "Perchance the luxuries of Egypt have tended to make you indolent and luxury-loving like the Christians, else victory would not have been so long delayed. The day on which you receive my letter, assemble all the troops and deliver a sermon on *Jihad*. Then lead the assault in such a way that the officers should move in front of the men and all the troops should attack the enemy with one accord." Amr accordingly assembled all the troops and delivered the sermon. He then harangued them in an eloquent oration which

* *Maqrizi*, Vol. I. pp. 164-65.

fanned the flames of enthusiasm. He asked Obada ibn Samit who had been the Prophet's companion for many years to lend him his lance and taking off his own turban from his head he put it on the point of the lance and said: "This is the Commander-in-Chief's standard: I give it to you and you are the Commander-in-Chief to-day." He then entrusted the command of the vanguard to Zubair ibn al-Awwam and Maslama ibn Mukhallad. In short the fort was attacked with such array and in the very first onset the city of Alexandria was carried by storm. Amr instantly sent for Muawiya ibn Khudaij and told him to speed as swiftly as he could and communicate the tidings of the victory to the Commander of the Faithful. Muawiya rode a dromedary and by dint of forced marches reached Medina in a very short time. It was the hour of noon when he arrived there and supposing that the Caliph might be indulging in the midday siesta he repaired straightway to the Prophet's mosque where the Caliph was wont to hold his court. A slave-girl belonging to the household of Omar happened to pass that way and seeing Muawiya in a traveller's garb asked him who he was and where he came from. "I come from Alexandria," he replied. At once she went home and informed Omar of the stranger's arrival and presently returned and told Muawiya that the Commander of the Faithful wanted him. Omar was so impatient that

he could not even wait for the brief interval that might elapse ere the messenger reached him. He got up to repair to the mosque in person and was just taking up his mantle when Muawiya arrived and rehearsed the joyful tidings of the victory. Omar at once prostrated himself on the ground offering thanks to God Almighty. He then proceeded to the mosque and had it proclaimed throughout the city that the attendance of the people was required at the mosque. No sooner had the announcement been made than all the Medinites hurried to the rendezvous and Muawiya described to the people everything about the victory in detail. He then accompanied Omar to the latter's house. Omar asked his slave-girl if she had any refreshments. She brought a loaf of bread and some olive oil. Omar set this "frugal-fare" before his guest and said: "Why did you not come to me straightway?" "I thought it was the hour of repose and perchance you were asleep," replied Muawiya. "I am sorry," rejoined Omar, "that you should have such a poor opinion of me. Who would bear the burden of the Caliphate if I were to sleep during the day?" *

After conquering Alexandria Amr returned to Fustat where he resolved to found a city. So setting apart separate tracts of land for the purpose he marked off lines for buildings which were

* We are indebted for all these details to *Maqrizi*.

constructed after the plain Arab fashion, the details of which will be dwelt upon at length in the second part of this book.

The fall of Alexandria and Fustat cleared the field of all formidable rivals. As, however, all the districts of Egypt, had, in their population, a large proportion of the Roman element, Amr despatched small bodies of troops in all directions to prevent all possibility of danger in the future. Kharija ibn Huzafa al-Adwi accordingly overran Fayum, Ashmunin, Akhmim, Bashrudat, Maeed and all the neighbouring territories and the inhabitants of all these places readily accepted the terms of *Jizia*. Similarly, Omair ibn Wahab al-Hamji captured Tanis, Dimiat (Damietta), Tuna, Damira, Shata, Waqhala, Bana and Buhir, while Oqba ibn Amir al-Jahani reduced all the low lying parts of the Egyptian valley.*

As the number of the Copts and the Romans taken prisoners during this campaign was very large Amr referred to the Caliph about the treatment which should be meted out to them. Omar replied as follow: "Tell the prisoners that they are at liberty to embrace Islam or to hold fast to their own religion. If they turn Musalmans they will become entitled to all those privileges which the other Muslims enjoy, otherwise they shall have to pay

* *Futuh al-Buldan*, p. 217.

Jizia which is levied from all the non-Muslims.' In pursuance of the Caliph's instructions Amr gathered together all the prisoners who numbered many thousands and at the same time sent for the Christian chieftains. The Musalmans and Christians then seated themselves in rows opposite to each other and the prisoners were stationed in the open space intervening between the two. As the Caliph's mandate was read out, many prisoners who had imbibed the purity of the Islamic tenets through association with the Musalmans adopted Islam while others remained true to their own religion. Whenever any of them avowed Islam the Musalmans raised the cry of *Allah Akbar* and were beside themselves with joy. On the other hand when a person announced his adherence to Christianity Christians congratulated each other with rapturous shouts while it occasioned so much grief to the Musalmans that tears trickled down the faces of many of them. This continued for a long time and each party reaped the succession that had been reserved for it.*

THE ASSASSINATION OF OMAR †
26TH ZILHIJJA, 23 A.H./644 A.D.

THERE was a Persian slave named Firoz in Medina, whose patronymic was Abu Lulu. One day he

* *Tabari*, pp. 2582-83.
† Period of Caliphate 10 years, 6 months and 4 days.

came to Omar with the complaint that his master Mughira ibn Shuba had imposed upon him a very heavy tax and begged the Caliph to prevail upon his master to reduce the same. Omar asked him the amount of the tax. He replied that it was two dirhams per diem. Omar then asked him his trade. "I work as a carpenter, a painter and an ironsmith," replied the slave. Thereupon, Omar said: "The amount is not much as compared with these lucrative avocations." This decision did not suit Firoz and with a heart boiling with suppressed rage he went away.

Next day as Omar left his house to say the morning prayer, Firoz came into the mosque armed with a dagger. Omar had entrusted certain men with the duty of seeing that the ranks of the congregation, when they stood to say the prayers, were straight and in order. When the ranks had been put in order, Omar would come forward and act as Imam. On the eventful day of which we are speaking when the lines of the devotees had as usual been set in scrupulous order, Omar came up and took his position at the head of the ranks to conduct the prayer. No sooner had he commenced reciting the service than Firoz suddenly rushed from behind and struck Omar six consecutive blows one of which fell upon the pelvis. Omar instantly caught hold of Abd al-Rahman ibn Auf's hand, suffered him to take his place and himself, unable to stand the

wounds, fell down upon the floor.

Abd al-Rahman conducted the service while Omar lay stabbed and mangled before him. Firoz wounded other persons also but at last he was arrested but committed suicide simultaneously.

Omar was now carried home. "Who is my assassin?" were the first words which escaped Omar's lips. "Firoz," replied the people. "Praise be to God that I am not murdered by a Musalman," rejoined Omar. The people were consoling themselves with the idea that his wound was not fatal and that it would probably be healed up. Accordingly a physician was sent for, who administered to him date cordial and milk. Both these, however, gushed forth from the wounds whereupon the conviction dawned on the people that he would not survive. They accordingly asked him to nominate his successor ere he left them for ever.

Omar asked his son Abdulla to go to Aisha and tell her that Omar begged permission from her to be buried by the side of the Prophet. Abdulla accordingly waited upon Aisha whom he found weeping. He conveyed to her the greetings and the message of Omar. Aisha said: "I had a mind to reserve this place for myself but to-day I will accord Omar precedence over myself." Abdulla now hastened back to his father who eagerly inquired: "What news bringest thou to me O my son?" "That which is calculated to give you satisfaction," re-

joined Abdulla. "It was the greatest wish of my life," said Omar.

At this time the question of nominating a Caliph was one of vital moment in so far as the interests of Islam were concerned. The Companions, one and all, repeatedly urged upon Omar the necessity of selecting his successor ere he breathed his last. Omar had long pondered over the question of the Caliphate. Ever and anon he was seen sitting apart from all, plunged in deep thought. Upon enquiry it would appear that he was brooding over the difficult problem of the Caliphate.

Even after so long a cogitation he could not fix upon any person as his fitting successor. Occasionally he would heave a deep drawn sigh and exclaim: "What a pity, I find none who can bear this heavy burden." Of all the Companions there were six persons living at this time who had a claim to succession. These were Ali, Osman, Zubair, Talha, Saad, Waqqas and Abd al-Rahman ibn Auf. Omar, however, detected some defect or other in all of them* and he had declared this on several occasions.

* We have refrained from committing to pen Omar's criticisms of the rest of these personages out of respect, but they are hardly open to comment. We cannot give credit, however, to the statement given in almost all the Muslim historical works that reflection was cast by Omar upon Ali to the effect that he was facetious. We admit that facetiousness was a trait of Ali's character but it did not exceed the punctilio of a nicely balanced humour.

The fact is that Ali's relations with the Quraish were of so complex a nature that the latter could not pay homage to him. The learned Tabari has described the views of Omar with regard to this question in the form

Tabari and other historians have described his remarks in this connection at length. Of the above mentioned personages he regarded Ali the best but

of a dialogue. We give it here to throw light on the secret of Omar's mind. The dialogue took place between Omar and Abdulla ibn Abbas, the clansman and partisan of Ali:

Omar: "Well Abdulla ibn Abbas! Why did not Ali join us?"

Abdulla ibn Abbas: "I don't know."

Omar: "Your father was the uncle and you are the cousin of the Prophet of God. Why, then, did not your people side with you?"

Abdulla ibn Abbas: "I do not know."

Omar: "But I know. Your tribe did not espouse your cause because it could not bear to see you extolled to the position of a ruler."

Abdulla ibn Abbas: "Why?"

Omar: "Because they did not like Prophethood as well as the Caliphate to be taken up by the same family. You might perhaps say that Abu Bakr deprived you of the Caliphate, but I swear by Allah that such is not the case. Abu Bakr did that than which nothing could have been more proper under the circumstances. Even if he had a mind to make over the Caliphate to you his so doing would not have benefited you at all.

In yet another dialogue which is more concise the following remarks were exchanged:

Omar: "Well Abdulla ibn Abbas! I have heard certain things about you but I have purposely desisted from investigating their truth lest the esteem with which I regard you might be lessened."

Abdulla ibn Abbas: "What are those things?"

Omar: "I have heard it said that you say that jealousy and tyranny have operated in actuating your rivals to despoil your family of the Caliphate."

Abdulla ibn Abbas: "As to tyranny I cannot say anything, for there is no one who does not know it, but if I were to say that we were deprived of the Caliphate on account of jealousy it should not be a thing to be wondered at. Satan was jealous of Adam and we are Adam's descendants. No wonder then if we are envied."

he could not, for certain reasons, decide definitely in his favour either.*

In short, at the pressing injunction of the people to express his view in regard to his successor, Omar observed in his last moment: "Of these six persons he who has the largest number of votes on his side should be elected Caliph."

The extent to which Omar was interested in the well-being of his people and country may be judged from the fact that even while suffering from excruciating pangs of agony he kept himself engrossed in the solution of the problem which lay uppermost in his mind as far as his diminishing powers and waning senses could permit. He addressed the people who were gathered around him thus: "Whoever is elected Caliph I charge him with respecting to the utmost the rights and privileges of these five sections of the people: the Muhajirin, the Ansar, the Beduins, those Arabs who have emigrated to foreign cities and the *Zimmis* (*viz.*, the Chris-

---

Omar: "What a pity old grudges still rankle in the hearts of the Banu Hashim!"

Abdulla ibn Abbas: "Do not say such a thing, for the Prophet himself was a Hashimite."

Omar: "Leave this controversy."

Abdulla ibn Abbas: "As you please!"

(*Tabari*, pp. 2768-71.)

These dialogues, besides throwing light on the main fact, also show in what a bold and free spoken manner people were wont to give expression to their ideas during the reign of Omar, and this was largely due to the fact that Omar was himself the advocate of freedom and truth among his people.

**Tabari*, p. 2777.

tians, the Jews and the Magi who were the subjects of Islam)." He then defined the privileges of each section. These were the words used by him with reference to the *Zimmis*: "It is my parting behest to the Caliph for the time being that he should pay due regard to the responsibilities of God and His Prophet, that is to say, the contract entered into with the *Zimmis* should be respected, their enemies should be repelled and they should not be subjected to that which is beyond their powers of endurance."

Having done with public affairs Omar turned attention towards his private concern. He sent for his son Abdulla and enquired: "How much do I owe?" "Eighty six thousand dirhams," he replied. On hearing this Omar said: "If this debt can be discharged from my personal property well and good; if not, you will request the clan of Adi to clear the same, and if they too are unable to do so then request the whole of the Quraish tribe, but you must not trouble others besides the Quraish to discharge me from my liabilities." This tradition is mentioned in the *Sahih al-Bukhari* (see *Kitab al-Manaqib*, chapter entitled: "Qissat al-Baiah wal Ittifaq ala Osman). Omar ibn Shibba, however, describes an authentic tradition in the *Kitab al-Madina* to the effect that Nafi, the slave of Omar, used to says: "How could Omar owe any debt when one of his inheritors sold his share for one hundred

thousand dirhams.*

The fact is that Omar was certainly indebted to the extent of eighty-six thousand dirhams, but the debt was paid off from the sale proceeds of his house which was purchased by Amir Muawiya. This building was situated between two gates, the Bab al-Salam and the Bab al-Rahmat, and as its proceeds went towards paying off the debt, it was for long known by the epithet "Dar al-Qaza." This event is described† at length in the *Khulasa al-Wafa fi Akhbar Dar al-Mustafa.*

Omar died three days after being wounded and was buried on Saturday the 1st of Muharram. The funeral service was performed by Suhaib. Abd al-Rahman, Ali, Osman, Talha, Saad ibn Waqqas and Abd al-Rahman ibn Auf lowered the body into the grave and that world-illuminating luminary was hidden in the dust.

* *Fath al-Bari*, Egyptain edition, vol. VII, p. 53.
† *Ibid*, pp. 129 and 179.

INDEX

A

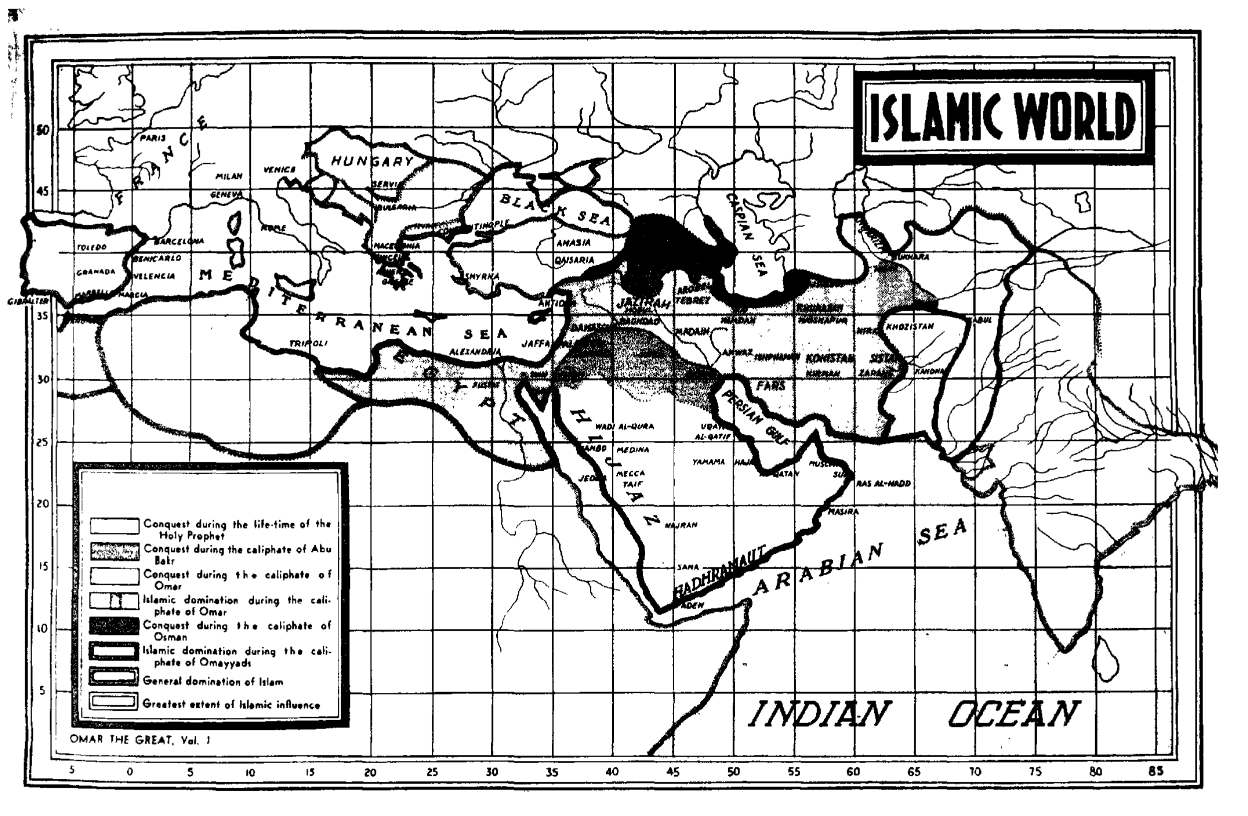
V

W

Y

Z





OMAR THE GREAT, Vol. 1